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# SONGS OF THE JEWISH CHURCH

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE  
STUDY OF THE PSALMS

BY

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London

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25-35 CITY ROAD, AND 26 PATERNOSTER Row, E.C.

*First Edition, 1913*

## PREFACE

THE following pages are the result of many years of study, and are published with the hope that they may be useful both to Bible students and to Christian pastors. The aim of the author has been to make the treatment of the thoughts expressed more suggestive than exhaustive. He trusts, however, that they are stated with sufficient clearness to be easily understood and appreciated. He has striven to avoid repetition, even when subjects have been most closely akin to each other. He has not repeated anything unless the subject treated required him so to do in order to make the meaning plain.

The quotations from the Scriptures, unless otherwise stated, are from the Revised Version. As one traces back the origin of our conceptions of truth, and even some set forms of speech in which we are wont to express these conceptions, the words come to mind, 'What have I that I have not received ?'

The references in these pages will show that the author is greatly indebted to several other writers on the Psalms and kindred subjects. For their highly valued help his hearty thanks are hereby tendered to them. Specially he desires to express his gratitude to the Rev. A. Roebuck, B.D., for his kindness in 'reading' the proof-sheets.

J. T. P.



## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	9
II. THE NATURE OF THE PSALMS . . . .	19
III. THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE PSALMS . . . .	33
IV. THE DATES OF THE PSALMS . . . .	46
V. THE COMPILATION OF THE PSALMS . . . .	56
VI. THE POETRY OF THE PSALMS . . . .	65
VII. THE MUSIC OF THE PSALMS . . . .	85
VIII. THE TITLES OF THE PSALMS . . . .	98
IX. THE CONCEPTION OF DEITY . . . .	113
X. IDEAS ABOUT MAN . . . .	128
XI. SIN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES . . . .	142
XII. PERSONAL RELIGION . . . .	152
XIII. VIEWS CONCERNING FUTURE LIFE . . . .	163
XIV. IMPRECATORY PSALMS . . . .	178
XV. MESSIANIC PSALMS . . . .	189
XVI. THE CHRISTIAN USE OF THE PSALTER . . . .	211



# SONGS OF THE JEWISH CHURCH

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

The Psalter a jewel-case—A collection of sacred lyric poems—The human element must never be ignored—The Church Fathers praise the Psalms—Our Lord and His Apostles quoted the Psalms freely—David the founder of psalmody—Psalter distinguished by grandeur of descriptions—Nature Psalms and the lessons they teach—The problems of the Psalms change as the years succeed each other—The devout use of Psalter increases appreciation of it.

THE Psalter is a jewel-case from which godly men and women obtain many rare and precious gems of thought to comfort and stimulate them as they travel along life's pathway. Hence the study of the nature,

date, and composition of the Psalms is one of no mean order: one upon which we should concentrate our best powers and employ every help within our reach. Whether it be in the recognition of the divine nature, the providence of God, confession of sin, the cry for pardon, or the yearning for closer fellowship with Deity, the many and varied tones of the writers touch chords that vibrate in the human soul and awaken within us desires in harmony with the thoughts expressed. And the marvel is that He who condescends so greatly to speak to human hearts in tones of pardon or of comfort is He who ruleth over all, and who ultimately ' shall judge the world with righteousness and the people with His truth ' (Ps. xcvi. 13).

The Psalter is a collection of sacred poems in lyric form. The Psalms were composed by several persons, and were brought together in their present positions as the result of editorial work. A purely secular song is not found anywhere in the book. It is a devotional manual: its lyrics were adapted to express and guide the religious life of the

Children of Israel. And as an important factor in the cultivation of piety amongst men, it has ever taken a high place in the literature of other nations.

In the study of the Psalms the human element must never be ignored. This thought applies not only to the language and form in which the Psalms have been composed, but likewise to the sentiments that expressed and that belong to the earlier stage of a spiritual experience that is progressive in its development. To the writers of the Psalms earthly prosperity largely filled up their idea of happiness. Around this mundane conception there gathered many cognate ideas which only find their explanation in the principal one, and which, while proper to that time, are below our present standard. We are now possessed of sentiments of a higher order; and the songs of our church life to-day anticipate blessedness hereafter rather than earthly happiness as man's ultimate good.

Bishop Horne points out,<sup>1</sup> and gives many

<sup>1</sup> *On the Scriptures*, vol. iv. p. 118.

quotations to illustrate his contention, that all the Fathers of the Church are eloquent in praise of the Psalms. Citations are to be found in the writings of Tertullian, Irenaeus, Origen, Eusebius, Ambrose and others. The Alexandrian school emphasized the allegorical, and the Antiochan the typical, method of interpretation. Pantaenus, who is reputed to have composed the first commentary, was the founder of the school of Alexandria at the beginning of the third century, while Lucian and Dorotheus established the Antiochan at its close.

An intermediate position was taken up by Jerome, who pleads for historical and grammatical exposition, while he himself often uses the allegorical method. Our Lord used the Psalter more than any other part of the Old Testament, and that for a number of purposes; while His Apostles, including St. Paul, use the Psalms freely as historical references, authoritative teaching, and practical exhortation. 'What is there necessary for man to know,' says the pious and judicious Hooker, 'which the Psalms are not able to

teach ?' Certainly they are a mine of truth in which, under all circumstances of life, we can dig and delve for that which will help us to walk circumspectly in the paths of righteousness for His Name's sake.

The greatest contributor to the Book of the Psalms is David. He is the founder of psalmody,<sup>1</sup> and in this character has laid succeeding generations under a debt of gratitude. His long life and varied experiences, together with his peculiar genius and divine inspiration, fitted him for the position, and gave an unspeakable freshness, force, and truth to his words. The varied metaphors and picturesque expressions of the Psalter have given food for thought to some of the best minds for more than 2,000 years. The harp of David 'celebrated his triumphs, soothed his sorrows, expressed his repentance, animated his patriotism, and declared his faith.' It is probable that we possess only a portion of the poems that David composed. That we have not all is clear from the historical books, such as his lament over

<sup>1</sup> Deane's *David: His Life and Times*, p. 214.

Jonathan and his dirge over the murdered Abner.

One feature for which the Psalms are distinguished is the grandeur of their descriptions. They are full of beauty and vigour, with a continuity of thought that leads us onwards unsatisfied till the goal is reached. Hitzig calls the Psalter an unrivalled production of art and reflection; and Dr. McLaren works out<sup>1</sup> this thought very beautifully in connexion with his exposition of the 18th Psalm. He affirms that 'No comment can heighten and no translation can adequately represent, while no man can altogether destroy the unapproachable magnificence of the coming forth of God' in answer to David's cry. This description, when compared with other sublime passages of Scripture, attains the supreme position: it is unique.

Another prominent feature of the Psalms is their appreciation of nature. At least six psalms (viii., xix., xxix., lxv., xciii., and civ.) are superb illustrations of this truth. The keynote of all is probably the first and last

<sup>1</sup> *Life of David as reflected in his Psalms*, p. 159.

verses of the 8th Psalm, 'O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth ! who hast set Thy glory above the heavens.' The 19th Psalm paints for us the glory of the heavens by day, as the 8th discloses the experience of many hours of lonely meditation spent beneath the stars. Both these astonomic psalms are unique literary compositions. The 29th is a beautiful and vivid picture of a thunderstorm such as must often have broken over the writer of the 23rd Psalm as he 'crouched under some shelf of limestone or gathered his trembling charge around him.' As we read its verses we seem to hear the echo of the rolling thunder as it reverberates among the hills. The 104th Psalm has been described as 'an inspired oratorio of creation,' where the Psalmist, in a few rapid touches of inspired ability, sketches a sublime picture of nature's marvels—unfolding; however, in unmistakable words the thought that they are but the evidences of the presence and power of the personal object of the Psalmist's adoration. 'O Lord my God' (v. 1). The divine activity in creation, rather than the

result, is emphasized in this poetic description, while a yet more perfect cosmos is prophesied when—

Sinners will be consumed out of the earth,  
And the sinner be no more.

The manifestation of God in nature is not the primary theme of the Psalms, but is one that constantly recurs. The 'Nature Psalms' have taught mankind many helpful lessons, the effects of which will remain as long as time shall last. The writers of these songs of praise did not appreciate nature for her own sake so much as because she declares the glory of God and shows forth His handiwork. The chief conception in their mind seems to have been the transcendence of God rather than His immanence. The glory of His presence is revealed by the proofs of His power; but that glory is 'set above the heavens.' It is only when He 'visits' the earth that man is blessed and 'the earth is satisfied with the fruit of His works' (civ. 13).

The problems that arise out of the study of the Psalms, for which students of the

Bible seek solutions, vary. Each age emphasizes some particular truth. The Psalter belongs to no one period: the time of its composition runs parallel to that of the Old Testament, for it begins with Moses and continues to the age of Malachi. In recent years biblical criticism has expended much effort on the Psalms. As a result many parts that were imperfectly understood have been made clear, while some familiar texts have been presented to us in new but improved form. Our belief as to the nature of inspiration may have undergone some change as we have grown in years, but our faith in the fact itself remains unshaken.

Appreciation of the Psalter increases with the devout use of it. It meets all tastes and is suited for all classes: rich and poor, learned and illiterate, young and old. By its means the Divine Spirit gives us words to express our thoughts when we hold communion with our Heavenly Father. We have fellowship also with the noblest and purest spirits of the Jewish nation. We can only rightly appreciate the history of the Israelites by the help

of the Psalter; and it affords to all sympathetic readers rich enjoyment and spiritual profit. Its five books deserve our careful study as well for their religious value as for their historical and critical elements. The greater our acquaintance with the Psalter, the more highly we value it. It speaks the language of universal worship, and it is the most helpful manual for private devotion that we possess.

## CHAPTER II

### THE NATURE OF THE PSALMS

The Psalms man's expression of God's revelation—Their place in the Old Testament canon—Psalms called 'Prayers,' and the Psalter 'Book of Praises'—The names of separate psalms—The Psalter divided into five books—The Greek Septuagint has one extra psalm—Duplicate Psalms—The uses of divine names—Some psalms of a proverbial character, others liturgical; some have musical directions affixed—The Psalter has always been regarded by the Church as the inspired rule of faith and practice—Its literary value—It is a manual of devotion.

THE Psalms are the response of the human heart to the revelation that God has given to man in His law. They are the return currents set in motion by the outflow of the divine will. Known as the Kethubhim or the Hagiographa, they form in the modern Hebrew Bible the first in order, and the most important book, of the third section of the

Old Testament canon. The name by which they are known is the 'Writings': the other two divisions being named the Law and the Prophets until the Synod of Jamnia. What exactly was included in this third division was matter of dispute; but there does not seem to have been any dispute as to the canonicity of the Psalter as a whole, or to any one of the psalms in particular. In 'Baba Bathra' of the Talmud, the most ancient writings extant, Ruth stands first: probably because the book records the ancestry of David and therefore should precede the Psalms written by him. The Psalter is also put before Job, because some of the psalms are attributed to Adam, Melchizedek, and Abraham. Modern Hebrew Bibles give the Psalter the first place in the Hagiographa, and this is probably the original order.

In the Scriptures the Psalter in its collective character has no distinctive name. The nearest approach thereto that it possesses is to be found in the 20th verse, 'the editorial statement' of Psalm lxxii.: 'The prayers (תְּפִלָּה) of David son of Jesse are ended.' A

name used by the Jews to express the Psalter was **סֶפֶר תְּהִלָּם**, Book of Praises. ‘We shall do well,’ says Dr. Cheyne, ‘to accustom ourselves to the intelligent use of this title, and to look out in every psalm for any element of praise.’ This name was current in the time of Origen and Hippolytus. Dr. W. T. Davison points out<sup>1</sup> that ‘the regular plural of this word is *tehilloth*; this feminine form being distinguished from the masculine *tehillim* in that the former points more distinctly to the subject-matter, the latter to the form of the composition.’ This general title, ‘Book of Praises,’ is a suitable one because the Psalms are occupied with the praises of God; and the superscriptions which give the authors’ names are at least as old as the collection itself. They are not authoritative, but they are of great antiquity and deserve respectful consideration. Dr. Perowne, in his valuable work on the Psalms, puts them on an equality with the subscriptions to the Epistles in the New Testament.

Separate psalms are usually known by the

<sup>1</sup> Hastings’ *Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. iv. p. 145.

term מִזְמֹר, Mizmōr. The word corresponds to *ψαλμός* in the Greek version. It signifies a selection of psalms to be sung with musical accompaniment in the public worship of the synagogue. Lowth, however, defines it as 'a poem cut up into short sentences and pruned from all superfluity of words.' The name occurs in the titles of fifty-seven psalms, though Dr. C. A. Briggs affirms that the original Mizmorim were probably fifty-four, whose original order was different in many instances from the order we now possess. The word is derived from צָר which expresses e.g. the clang of harp-strings. מִזְמֹרִים is sometimes used in conjunction with שִׁיר (Shîr), which is a more general term and is used for secular songs or poems.

The Book of Psalms as we now possess it has for many centuries been divided into five books :

Book I. Psalms i.-xli.

„ II. „ xlvi.-lxxii.

„ III. „ lxxiii.-lxxxix.

„ IV. „ xc.-cvi.

„ V. „ cvii.-cl.

The divisions are marked in our Revised Version of the Bible. They are indicated by the doxologies which have been placed at their close. They probably follow the five-fold division of the Torah (or Law), and the five great feasts of the Jews. Doxologies have been added to Psalms lxxii. and cvi., but none to Psalm cl., because it is regarded as forming in itself an appropriate conclusion. These doxologies are benedictions ; and though only given at the end of the divisions, they were really used at the conclusion of every psalm, or part thereof, sung in the liturgy. This fivefold division of the Psalter has been recognized by the Jews since the middle of the second century, and was made to suit the three years' course of Sabbath readings in the Synagogue. In the Greek Septuagint there are 151 psalms. Another psalm has been added that describes the anointing of David and his combat with Goliath. It was originally written in Hebrew, but has no claims to genuineness and is nowhere so regarded. The following is a translation of this psalm as given by Dr. McLaren :

This is the autograph psalm of David, and beyond the number [i.e. of the psalms in the Psalter] when he fought the single fight with Goliath. '1. I was little among my brethren, and the youngest in the house of my father: I kept the flock of my father. 2. My hands made a pipe, my fingers tuned a psaltery. 3. And who shall tell it to my Lord? He is the Lord, He shall hear me. 4. He sent his angel [messenger] and took me from the flocks of my father, and anointed me with the oil of His anointing. 5. But my brethren were fair and large, and in them the Lord took not pleasure. 6. I went out to meet the Philistine, and he cursed me by his idols. 7. But I drawing his sword, beheaded him and took away reproach from the Children of Israel.'

The total number of psalms, then, is 150. They are of unequal length, extending from two verses (117th), to one hundred and seventy-six (119th). In the Hebrew and Greek versions, while the same number is preserved, there is some difference in detail. One peculiar feature of the Psalter is that

several psalms are found in duplicate. Of this we give three illustrations. The 14th and 53rd Psalms are evidently the same, with a few unimportant changes. The 70th Psalm is essentially the same as verses 13-17 of Psalm xl.; while Psalm xviii. is a repetition of the song given in 2 Sam. xxii. Hengstenberg argues that David himself was the composer of each form of the composition, and that therefore both are equally authentic and inspired. But as Dr. Samuel Davidson points out,<sup>1</sup> authors in Old Testament times did not critically and minutely correct their own productions. This is a modern custom. The revisions were made by editors to make the psalms fit for liturgical services.

To some psalms, such as xxxiii., xxxiv., xxxvii., and cxix., the term 'proverbial' has been given. Quite a number of psalms are of a liturgical character, and in their titles have references to the Director or Choir-master. There are fifty-five that have לְמִזְבֵּחַ in their inscriptions. This is probably the noun derived from the participle of נָצַר (to

<sup>1</sup> *Introduction to Old Testament*, p. 267.

preside over), and the term means belonging to the Director or Choirmaster. These psalms were taken during the middle Greek period from the larger collection having the title of Director. It is interesting to note that the divine name of Yahweh is retained. This fact indicates that this collection was used in Palestine as a devotional manual in religious worship. The preposition *τον* is supposed by Olshausen to denote authorship; but this prefix particle evidently has the meaning attached to it that is expressed above.

To twenty-nine of these psalms musical directions are affixed. They are of three kinds and have reference (1) to the tone in which the psalm was to be sung; (2) to the character of the voice, either falsetto or bass, that was most appropriate to the words; and (3) to the kinds of musical instruments, either stringed or wind, that would be most suitable as an accompaniment to the singing. In the earlier Psalters we find few references to musical instruments; while in the Hallels of the Maccabean Period a greater number and variety of instruments

are mentioned. On ordinary occasions 'a simple orchestra of two or four pieces of the lighter string and wind instruments' are used; but on great occasions, e.g. at feasts and in the temple worship, more and louder instruments provided the music. The meaning of some of these musical directions is still obscure.

That the Psalter has an undoubted right to a place in the Sacred Canon has never been disputed. It was the first of the 'Writings' to receive recognition as canonical. Its division into five books, like the Division of the Pentateuch, is a strong liturgical evidence; while the numbering of the psalms was doubtless for the purpose of being read with the Pentateuch which had been similarly arranged, every three years on the Sabbath days. The subject-matter of the Psalter attests its canonicity. It is a holy book. Its religion, doctrines, and ethics show that it comes from a divine source, and is suitable for man in every age. At once simple and comprehensive, the Psalter affords us in lyric form the material by which, either

as individuals or communities, we can express in choicest language our loftiest aspiration after God and divine things. The Psalms are frequently alluded to in the Old Testament and are often quoted by our Lord and His Apostles alongside of the Law and Prophets as the work of the Holy Spirit, and therefore as authoritative and suitable for worship.

Christians in all ages have used the Psalter as the rule and guide of religious walk and worship ; they have ever regarded it as a divinely-inspired book. Appropriate psalms have always been used in the celebration of the holy Eucharist. It is said that Ignatius, about A.D. 100, introduced antiphonal singing of the Psalms into the church ritual at Antioch. Tertullian (A.D. 190-214) tells us that the Christians of his day were wont to sing many of the psalms in their Agapae. Jerome (A.D. 331-420) affirms that the Psalms were continually to be heard in the fields and vineyards of Palestine. The ploughman, as he held his plough, chanted his Hallelujah ; and the reaper, the vine-dresser, and the shepherd

sang something from the Songs of David. St. Chrysostom tells us that in his day the Psalms were used by men and maidens in all the varied conditions of life, and that always 'David is first, last, and midst.' Ambrose in the fourth century used the Psalter, and enjoined it on his people, reciting it once a fortnight at the fixed hour of prayer. Since then the Psalms have been constantly used in Christian worship.

The multiplication of hymns in recent times has brought about a gradual disuse of the Psalter amongst several religious denominations in Great Britain and America. In the Roman Catholic Church it is recited once a week by the several religious orders of which that church is composed; and the members of the Greek Church recite the Psalter once a week except during the season of Lent, when it is recited twice—a usage in which it is followed by most Eastern churches.

The literary value of the Psalter is worthy of note. Many of its lyrics fully satisfy the highest canons of literary art; and its genuine human character will ensure its enduring

quality. But the greatest value of the Psalms is their religious significance. They enable man, under all the varied experiences through which he is called to pass, to voice his deepest emotions and his highest hopes.

The most important feature in the study of the Psalms is their spiritual meaning and devotional use. 'No single book of Scripture,' as Bishop Perowne affirms,<sup>1</sup> 'not even of the New Testament has perhaps ever taken such hold on the heart of Christendom.' The Psalms are admirably fitted to nourish and regulate religious emotions, and have been used for this purpose in all ages of the world. Calvin, in his preface to the commentary on the Psalms, says, 'This book I am wont to style an anatomy of all parts of the soul, for no one will discover in himself a single feeling whereof the image is not reflected in this mirror.' The reason of this is not far to seek, for the noblest aspirations of God-fearing men are essentially and ever the same. In the Psalter we may always find illustrations of our own spiritual state in

<sup>1</sup> *On the Psalms*, p. 22.

language of perfect beauty. There we can obtain an adequate vocabulary, as comprehensive as human needs and as varied as human life, by which we can give expression to our intensest yearnings as well as our profoundest experiences.

By means of the Psalter we can approach the throne of grace and make our requests known unto God in appropriate inspired language ; while in its pages the Church has ever found, for all its varied services, a rich storehouse of liturgical forms for every exercise of public worship. From the Psalms we learn what is displeasing to God, as well as acceptable to Him ; and we find out how to regulate, as well as express, our Godward emotions. The Psalter has made God more real to us and confidence in Him more possible. Viewing the divine glory in this mirror, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

One effect that the Psalter has upon its readers is to inflame their hearts and lives with greater affection and devotion. As iron sharpeneth iron, so the fervour of the Psalm-

ists in their prayers and praises enkindles within us a glow of love and thankfulness which, as an effect, is perhaps greater than the cause which evokes it. By its aid we are enabled to fill in the outline of David's reign sketched in the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, transforming it into a real thing, instinct with life and activity. The Psalter gives to us a vivid picture of the true life of the nation; while from the Messianic Psalms we are furnished with evidences for the truth of Christianity. And all who have entered into the meaning of these psalms will have learned something of the unique service which, in the past, the Jewish race has rendered to the progress of spiritual religion.

## CHAPTER III

### THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE PSALMS

Criteria that help: what Jewish writers say—David the father of Hebrew psalmody—The titles not always reliable—Internal evidences a large factor in determining authorship—Quotations in the New Testament—The qualifications of David to be a Psalmist—The Church's estimate of his psalms—Asaph, the sons of Korah, and other composers—Many psalms possess a representative character.

THERE are several criteria that help us in determining the authors of the various psalms ; and, in estimating the value of each criterion, we must obtain all the help we can from every available source. The poetical character of the composition will first demand our attention ; for its structure may reveal much concerning its composer. Then if it happens to be a psalm with an inscription, the evidence of tradition may unfold its

author's name in its title. Personal circumstances and historical surroundings, which are sometimes clearly indicated, will afford clues to authorship which will not only prove valuable, but in their cumulative effect may leave no room for uncertainty concerning any given psalm.

Jewish writers ascribe the Psalms to ten different authors, and make David the collector of them into one volume or book. But it is impossible to deal with so important a matter in so exact a manner. The titles, which, if they could be taken as authentic, would greatly help us in deciding the question of authorship, are, unfortunately, not always reliable. Some may be out of harmony with the contents of the psalms to which they are prefixed, e.g. Psalm lxxxvi., which is composed entirely of reminiscences of earlier psalms and therefore must have been written by a poet of a later time. Some imply a series of circumstances that only existed at a later date than the designated author lived ; e.g. the psalms that refer to the ' holy temple,' when the original word could hardly refer

to the tent spread by David for the ark (2 Sam. vii. 2-6); and where the other terms employed refer to a later situation than the title indicates.

The father of Hebrew psalmody was David (1 Chron. xv. 23-5; 2 Chron. vii. 29), though psalms were used before his time, as e.g. by Miriam (Exod. xv. 21):

Sing ye to the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously :  
The horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea.

Some of the earlier and more personal psalms reflect the character and youthful struggles of David. His name appears in the titles of seventy-three psalms in the Hebrew text and in eleven others in the Greek Septuagint version. But that he was the author of all these psalms we are not prepared to affirm. We must, however, not be afraid to declare the probability that he is the author of some of the psalms we now possess. On this subject tradition is too strong and too persistent to be lightly set aside. The general reputation of David as a psalmist rests upon too firm a foundation for that. It would

indeed be a strange anomaly if he were the most eminent poet of his day, and yet for none of his compositions to remain. Neither can Psalm xviii. be the only specimen of his poetry that we possess. Ewald admits in his commentary that 'The conclusion from all exactest investigation is that certainly a considerable mass of songs, and these the finest and most important, proceed from David, or at least from his time.' That he is the main author of the Psalter, Olshausen, Kuenen, and Hitzig deny; but undoubtedly this is the conclusion to which criticism has come, and where it is likely to remain.

The first division of the Psalms has always been regarded as Davidic; and even critics of the moderate school such as Ewald on aesthetic grounds (also Delitzsch and Perowne) ascribe to him Psalms iii., iv., vii., viii., xv., xviii., xxiii., xxiv., xxxi., ci., as well as xix. 1-6. In 2 Sam. xxii. we have a psalm of thanksgiving that is also found in Psalm xviii. In both cases the psalm is ascribed to David; and it is expressly stated that he wrote the words of this song to celebrate his deliverance

‘from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul.’ Could we be assured of the authentic character of this ascription, we should have a surer basis on which to build arguments concerning David’s style and mode of composition. Davison says<sup>1</sup> that the freshness and vigour which characterize this psalm have convinced Ewald and many other critics of its Davidic authorship. The lament over Saul and Jonathan narrated in 2 Sam. i. which is ascribed to David is undoubtedly genuine, and also helps us to determine the style of the Sweet Psalmist of Israel.

The titles attached to many of the psalms cannot always be followed with safety. The Aramaisms to be found, e.g. in Psalm cxxxix., indicate, it is said, a much later date. Noldeke,<sup>2</sup> however, writing on the language of the Old Testament, admits that ‘intercourse with Arameans caused some Aramaic words to be imported into the Hebrew tongue at a comparatively early date.’ Some psalms lack

<sup>1</sup> Hastings’ *Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. iv. p. 151.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Whitelaw in *Old Testament Critics*, p. 312.

the vigour and style characteristic of the Davidic period, and are evidently but reflections of earlier lyrics, as e.g. the 86th, which is composed almost entirely of such reminiscences. Psalms xxv., xxxiv., xxxvii. are not likely to be Davidic, for their contents not only indicate a condition of life amongst the Israelites foreign to his time, e.g. exhortations to patience under oppression, but their acrostic form is a late kind of composition, so far as our other known examples of it show: though Driver admits that the alphabetical arrangement 'cannot be proved to have been unused as early as David's day.'

Internal evidence, such as peculiarities of style and historical allusions, is also a large factor in determining authorship. Of this fact the best illustration is perhaps Psalm cx. Ability to properly estimate evidence at its real worth is essential to a right use of this class of evidence. Several modern critics assign Psalm cx. to a later date than that of David; older expositors, however, recognize, in its diction and the occasional obscurities

of its phraseology, evidences of an early date. The fact that our Lord quoted this psalm as David's must certainly influence us in the conclusion at which we arrive; and it is assuredly strong evidence that the current opinion of His time, that of the doctors and leaders of the Jewish church and nation whose duty it was to study and teach the Scriptures that had come down to them from a venerable past, regarded the psalm as Davidic as well as Messianic.

Four psalms, viz. the 2nd, 16th, 95th, and 110th, are quoted (Acts iv. 25, xiii. 33, ii. 25; Heb. iv. 7; Acts. ii. 34) as David's by the inspired writers of the New Testament. Sometimes it is said that psalms ascribed to David appear to refer to circumstances which can only be characteristic of a later age. We have already referred to those that imply the existence of the temple. The 51st Psalm is regarded as implying an approaching restoration of Jerusalem and Judah which, if true, would require a later date than the time of the founder of Hebrew psalmody. But may it not, even if literal and historical,

refer to the building of Jerusalem, as that event is described in 2 Sam. v. 9 ?

At the close of the 72nd Psalm there is the significant statement that 'the prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.' These words are now regarded as the work of editorship rather than authorship. This collection of psalms intended for Synagogue use was made, it is thought, in the late Persian period, and placed under the general name of David. Thirteen of these psalms appear to have been an original collection ; and their titles refer to various incidents in the life of David. If designed to illustrate these incidents chronologically, they are evidently not in their right order. Dr. Briggs suggests<sup>1</sup> that the order as taken from the narrative of Samuel is lix., lvii., lxiii., lii., liv., cxlii., lvi., xxxiv., lx., li., iii., vii., xviii.

In the art of making lyric poems, the Sweet Singer of Israel was a pastmaster, and reveals a mind richly endowed, as well as an experience varied and of long duration. He was a many-sided poet, who laid under contribution

<sup>1</sup> *Critical Commentary on Psalms*, Intro. lviii.

everything that came within his reach. All that knowledge and observation could afford was utilized ; while the Divine Spirit inspired him, so that he was able to use the right words to express his profound and spiritual feelings. The very possession of these rich poetical endowments should lead us to expect (1) that which we are expressly told, that David was the father of Hebrew psalmody ; (2) that, in accordance with ancient tradition, David wrote psalms that all through the centuries have been regarded as his composition.

The Church in all ages has turned to the Psalms, amid the varying experiences through which her members have passed, for comfort, stimulus, and guidance ; and they have never turned thereto in vain. The words of David have been their especial delight. Other psalmists may excel him in some one particular trait, but none can be compared with him in beauty or range of inspiration.

After David the largest number of psalms is assigned to Asaph. To him twelve are attributed. From the Chronicles we learn

that he was a Levite, the son of Berechiah of the family of Gershom, and that he was chief of those who ministered before the ark of the Lord in the time of David (xv. 17, xvi. 15). Among his countrymen he was highly esteemed, not only during his life, but afterward: for we learn (2 Chron. xxix. 30) that in the reign of Hezekiah he was regarded as a seer, and the people coupled his words with those of David 'as they sang praises with gladness and they bowed their heads and worshipped.' This group of psalms, having the name Asaph attached to them, include l., lxxiii.-lxxxiii. inclusive. The reason why the 50th Psalm is detached from the rest probably is that it makes a fitting conclusion to the first division of fifty in the Psalter.

All these psalms are admitted to have common features; but this fact does not necessarily imply the same author. The 74th and 79th Psalms can hardly have been written by Asaph, because the contents refer to the defilement of the Sanctuary and the desolation of Jerusalem. We must conclude

that they were composed during the Exile: hence another Asaph must be the author, or they were erroneously inscribed. Briggs affirms that none of these psalms was written by Asaph; while Davidson says he is probably the author of l. and lxxiii. All we can be assured of is, that they were originally in a collection by themselves, because of their similarity of subject. They are psalms in which the sentiments are lofty in tone, the style vehement and rugged. The collection was made in the early Greek period, most likely in Babylonia.

Eleven psalms have in their titles the phrase 'belonging to the sons of Korah.' But exactly what the preposition 'בְּ' means, it is difficult to decide. It may mean that the psalms were written by them, or were composed for them, or had to be performed by them with music in the temple. For the name בְּנֵי קֹרַה is used of a Levitical family of singers, who in the reign of Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. xx. 19) are mentioned as still continuing to lead the worship of Israel in the house of the Lord. By whom these

psalms were composed is unknown. Bleek suggests that their author was a Jewish priest living in the reign of Ahaz or Hezekiah. Certainly they are of later date than the Davidic period. They all possess features in common that imply careful selection. They are beautiful specimens of lyrical composition, and are characterized by sublimity of thought and felicity of expression.

Several other proper names are attached to single psalms, e.g. Solomon lxxii., He-man lxxxviii., Ethan lxxxix., Moses xc. Psalm cxxvii. in our Revised Version is also said to be 'of Solomon'; but this ascription is incorrect. It is a pilgrim psalm, of late date, and is omitted from the Septuagint. Who were the real authors of these psalms, it is impossible to say. Their titles are usually regarded as pseudonyms; and they are used to indicate that the psalms are written from the standpoint of the Old Testament worthies whose names they bear. The rest of the Psalms, as far as authorship is concerned, are anonymous.

Many psalms are of a representative char-

acter ; and perhaps this is the best place to mention this fact. Some writers may have pushed this principle too far ; but this need not blind our eyes to the truth underlying this principle. Several psalms, in which the first person singular is used, evidently give expression to the feelings of the community. These emotions, though at first individualistic, attain greater force and significance when they are regarded as felt and expressed by the nation. Hence we meet with psalms where the writer speaks, not only on his own behalf, but also on behalf of his compatriots and co-religionists. The following psalms are illustrations of this representative character where the speaker is really the commonwealth of Israel :

For I will not trust in my bow,  
Neither shall my sword save me (xli. 6).

Who will bring me into the strong city ?  
Who hath led me unto Edom ? (lx. 9).

Remember, Lord, the reproach of Thy servants ;  
How I do bear in my bosom the reproach of all the  
mighty peoples (lxxxix. 50).

## CHAPTER IV

### THE DATES OF THE PSALMS

The Psalms of different dates—Many composed during the Hebrew monarchy—Are any psalms pre-exilic?—The titles of some psalms are suggestive as to date—The language of a psalm assists in determining its date, also historical allusions and religious thoughts—Probably a few psalms belong to the Maccabean age—The spiritual value of the Psalter not affected by our views concerning the date of individual psalms.

THE Psalter represents many centuries of growth, and the dates of individual psalms can only be given in a general way. There are no precise rules for the order in which the psalms occur. The reasons sometimes offered why certain dates should be assigned to particular psalms are very slender. Many psalms, e.g. lxxiii., lxxv., lxxxii., lxxxiv., lxxxviii., contain no indication of date whatever; so it is impossible to fix the exact

time when they were composed. In Dr. Briggs' masterly work there is a table 'to illustrate the evolution of the Psalter.' In it we have, in clear and easily understood form, his view regarding that evolution. A careful study of the style and contents of the Psalter proves that the Psalms had various authors, who lived in ages far apart from each other.

Many of the psalms were composed during the Hebrew monarchy ; some, no doubt, by David himself. This view is maintained by Dr. Davison in the general conclusions of his article in Hastings' *Dictionary*. Some psalms came into existence during the Babylonian captivity ; others during the late Persian period ; and it is affirmed by some writers, e.g. Hitzig and Olshausen, that many psalms, e.g. xvi., xx., xliv., are the product of the Maccabean age. Horne gives a chronological arrangement of the Psalms ; and Davidson, on more modern lines, gives 'a hasty survey' of the subject. Care, however, must be taken not to confuse the date of compilation with the date of composition ; though the

former will oft-times throw much light upon the latter.

Wellhausen questions whether any of the psalms are pre-exilic; and he has some followers. Cheyne seems unwilling to allow even one of the psalms to be pre-exilic, and generally applies the scattered references to monarchy to the time of the Maccabean revival. Dr. Kirkpatrick inclines to the latter view; but Dr. Davidson<sup>1</sup> argues to the contrary, and appears to have logic on his side. Wellhausen's words, taken from Bleek's *Introduction*, are these: 'Since the Psalter belongs to the Hagiographa, and is the hymn-book of the congregation of the second temple . . . the question is not whether it contains any post-exilic psalms, but whether it contains any pre-exilic psalms.' From internal evidence of the Psalter we must admit that religious poetry existed before the Exile. Of this fact Psalm cxxxvii. is an illustration. There are definite references to the king, e.g. Psalms ii., xx., xxxiii., which cannot be assigned to any Maccabean reign; while

<sup>1</sup> *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 260-61.

Psalms xlvi.-xlviii., lxxv.-lxxvi., are similar in thought and expression to the Assyrian prophecies of Isaiah, and are 'more naturally' referred to the date 701 B.C., the deliverance from the Assyrians under Sennacherib, than to any later period. Dr. Driver admits that Psalms ii., xviii., xx., xxi., xxviii., xl., lxi., lxii., lxxii., ci., and cx. may be 'presumed' to be pre-exilic; Psalms xc., xci. may be so likewise.

The titles that have been placed at the beginning of many psalms often suggest a historical setting for the Psalms, and in that way indirectly affect our estimate of the date. From information gathered out of the books of Samuel we find that several psalms are, by their titles, referred to events in the life of David, e.g. Psalms iii. (2 Sam. xv.-xviii.), xviii. (2 Sam. xxii.), li. (2 Sam. xii.), lii. (1 Sam. xxii. 9), liv. (1 Sam. xxiii. 19), lvi. (1 Sam. xxi. 11), lvii. (1 Sam. xxii. 1), lix. (1 Sam. xix. 11), lx. (1 Sam. viii. 3, 13), lxiii. (1 Sam. xxii. 5, and xxiii. 14-16), cxlii. (1 Sam. xxii. 1).

Between the title of Psalm xxx. and its

contents there seems to be little connexion. It is said to be a psalm of David; but the words 'at the dedication of the house' probably refer not to the dedication of David's own palace, or the site of the temple, but to a later date when, at the anniversary of the dedication of the temple by Judas Maccabaeus (see 1 Macc. iv. 52 f.; and *τὰ ἐγκαίνια* John x. 22), the psalm was publicly recited.

There are several means used to determine the date of any given psalm. Perhaps the most important of these is the language employed. Style is not always a sure guide to either authorship or date. From this standpoint, however, comparing the language of Psalms and prophets, Psalm lxix. has been confidently assigned to the time of Jeremiah. Concerning the Maccabean age we may safely say that the language then current was not so pure as is the language of many psalms often remitted to that period. Hupfeld's words, quoted by Dr. Driver, may be repeated here with profit: 'Such psalms as are hard, bold, original, are, as a rule, the older; those of which the style is easy

and flowing, and which are marked by the presence of conventional thoughts and expressions, are later. For older prophets had to strike out their own paths, and thus appear often contending with language and thought ; later poets, on the contrary, moved, as it were, upon accustomed tracks and frequently found thoughts, figures, and language ready for their use ; hence their compositions generally contain many reminiscences and standing phrases, and may even sometimes almost entirely consist of them. Such reminiscences and conventional phrases are most frequent in the psalms of complaint, the alphabetical psalms, and the doxological or liturgical psalms. Aramaisms and non-classical idioms are likewise marks of a late age. But we cannot with equal confidence from the poetical power and purity of diction which a psalm may display infer conversely that it is ancient, since psalms that are unquestionably late in these respects not unfrequently equalled the more ancient models.'

But while language is not a sure guide,

it is a guide that must not be thrown aside as useless in helping us to solve the problems of Higher Criticism. When we compare the Psalms and the prophets, we find that the latter evidence the greater amount of originality: hence the Psalms must be the later production. Further, the psalms which are more liturgical are older than those which display a wide experience and an advanced spirituality. We conclude, then, that some psalms are pre-exilic (though it is often difficult from their general style to determine which); some, e.g. xxii., li., lxvi.-lxx. are exilic; while in many psalms, especially those in which Aramaisms are marked, the post-exilic date is manifest and is now hardly a matter for controversy.

Historical allusions help us in determining the age of a psalm. It is true that these records are only fragmentary and partial; and they may only enable us to fix the general period to which a psalm belongs. Still any statements that will assist the sincere student are highly prized. Some psalms imply an existent monarchy by their references to the

king, and are therefore probably pre-exilic ; some contain allusions to the people in conditions that are clearly exilic, e.g. Psalm cxxxvii., or in the post-exilic period, e.g. Psalm cxxvi. And to those periods such psalms are legitimately referred. While other psalms, e.g. xliv., lxxiv., lxxix., lxxxiii., on account of their professions of national integrity, &c., which can hardly be reconciled with an earlier stage of the nation's history, are affirmed to belong to the Maccabean age.

The religious thoughts expressed in any given psalm, judged from a theological standpoint, also assist us in deciding upon its age ; while, by comparing Scripture with Scripture, we attain the same result from a study of parallel passages. The general conclusion at which we arrive, by means of these various helps, is that while a number of the psalms are pre-exilic and are found in the earlier books, the greater proportion come to us from the seventh or eighth century B.C., while a few must be assigned to so late a date as the third or second century B.C.

Our knowledge of post-exilic Judaism is

but scanty, and we cannot speak with certainty in the present state of our information about those times, concerning the existence of Maccabean psalms; but there seems strong probability that a few such psalms, not a great many as Olshausen affirms, did find their way into the Psalter after the second book possessed a separate existence. Opinions have varied much amongst scholars. Some have suggested that the language of Psalms xliv., lxxiv., lxxix., lxxxiii. may refer to earlier desolations than the ones that took place in the time of Antiochus, and they call attention to the lack in them of distinctive features of Macedonian times such as enforced idolatry, temporizing priesthood, and party jealousies. But as Dr. Davison points out concerning Psalm lxxiv. 8, the phrase מִשְׁׁעֵנָאָל (though understood by the Seventy of feasts) seems distinctly to point to the synagogues of a later period; while Psalm lxxiv. 9 connects itself naturally with 1 Macc. iv. 46, ix. 27, xiv. 41.

We must, however, never forget that the spiritual value of the Psalms is not affected

by any views we may hold, or any changes that may be necessary, in our conceptions as to authorship or date.<sup>1</sup> If a friend writes to us, it is not a matter of supreme moment to us what pen he uses. And if God speaks to us, the messenger through whom He communicates His will is of less importance than the truth he reveals. 'The Psalms should be studied in the light of eternal truth, and the local significance should be lost in the universal.' Their great use as an index of religious life, and a guide to communion with the Supreme, will remain the same whatever may be our judgement as to the date of particular psalms. They enable us, in the Holy of Holies of the divine presence, to express our deepest emotions and highest aspirations. They have brought God near to us and made our fellowship with Him a real and blessed experience.

<sup>1</sup> *Interpreter*, October 1911, p. 66.

## CHAPTER V

### THE COMPILATION OF THE PSALMS

The Psalter a collection of psalms : it has grown gradually to its present size—It has had several editors—It is a compilation of post-exilic age—The view of Dr. Briggs—The pilgrim Psalter : theories to explain their character—The design of the compilers and the principles that guided them—The special use of the two names for Divine Being in the different books.

THE Psalter, as we possess it, bears internal marks of true growth and continued development. It has increased gradually something after the manner in which modern hymn-books are formed. The five divisions, shown in our Revised Version, are ancient, being in existence before the Septuagint translation was made, and have been recognized by the Jews from at least the second century of our era. Some critics have suggested that the

collection of the Psalms was made by one man who did not precede Nehemiah. Hengstenberg has a very ingenious theory to show that one principle runs throughout the whole compilation, and that the chronicler was guided in his arrangement by similarity of contents and sameness of purpose. But this theory is too complex and artificial to be probable, and must be rejected.

Whether Ezra made the compilation or not we cannot say with certainty; but the suggestion that he gathered together the existent psalms and united them into one volume about 450 b.c. is probable. From his time the pious work of collecting the prayers and praises of Jewish saints that had been preserved as psalms was continued by various editors until the task was completed in the early part of the second century b.c. Prefixed to the Greek translation of Ecclesiasticus made 132 b.c., there is a brief introduction where, in the compass of a few lines, the Scriptures are three times over divided into the well-known three parts. From these words of the grandson of Jesus

the son of Sirach and author of Ecclesiasticus, we arrive at the conclusion that the Septuagint translation of the Psalter was complete by 132 B.C. Confirmatory evidence is found in the quotation by 1 Macc. vii. 16, the date of which is about 125 B.C., of Psalm lxxix. This quotation proves that the Psalter existed before that date.

Davidson's view<sup>1</sup> is that the collector of the first book wished to give only the psalms of David, and that they were collected after the captivity because of what is contained in the 4th and 31st Psalms. The second book came from the hands of another collector, as is evidenced by the use of its characteristic word Elohim (אֱלֹהִים), so different: from the constant use of Yahweh (יְהָוָה) in the first. As psalms of the Captivity are found in it, they must have been written after that event. The third and fourth books are minor collections in which the odes of Asaph, the Songs of Degrees, and the Hallelujah Psalms are found. The second and third books were most probably—follow-

<sup>1</sup> *Introduction to Old Testament*, vol. ii. p. 264.

ing Olshausen—completed by the same person, because Elohim is the usual word for Deity in both; while the psalms of the fourth book, being like one another in subjects and language, probably belong to the same time.

The Psalter, in all its parts, is a compilation of post-exilic age. W. R. Smith, quoted by Driver, shows that Books 1 and 2 were compiled after the Exile, 'and that they express, on the whole though not exclusively, a religious life of which the Exile is the presupposition. Only in this way can we understand the conflict and triumph of the spiritual faith of a poor and struggling band living in the midst of oppressors, and with no strength or help but the consciousness of loyalty to Jehovah which is the fundamental note of the whole book.'

The view of Dr. Briggs is that the editor of the present Psalter used the two major Psalters as the nucleus of his work. He placed first the psalms from the Palestinian Director's Psalter, in which were inserted chiefly psalms from the Davidic Psalter.

Then he added Psalms xlii.—lxxxiii., in which the divine name Elohim is used, and which were originally compiled in Babylonia in the middle Greek period. To these Psalms lxxxiv.—lxxxix. were added as an appropriate completion. These two major Psalters were increased by the addition of the Temple Hallels, the Pilgrim Psalter, and other appropriate psalms, principally of late date. These psalms, that have in their title **תָּהֲלֵל יְהָוָה** (praise ye Jah), are found chiefly in the fifth book (also Psalms civ.—cv.). The first compilation was made in the Greek period, and this was afterwards enlarged in the Maccabean age.

The Pilgrim Psalter (Psalms cxx.—cxxiv.) was a collection of songs composed in the middle Greek period. They have in their titles **שָׁר הַפְּעָלִות** (song of ascents), and they possess a common social and patriotic character. Their titles indicate that at one time they formed a separate collection. They have been variously explained by different writers. They are said (1) to refer to the stairlike parallelism used in the metre (**hexa-**

meter) indicating the advance made by steps or degrees. This theory, however, is weak because this method is not used in all the psalms ; while there are other psalms in the Psalter that do use this kind of parallelism, which, if this theory had been true, should have been found among these Songs of Pilgrimage. (2) It is supposed to point out the ritual chanted by the male Israelites as they ascended the fifteen steps that in the temple led from the court of the women to that of the men. A sufficient answer to this view is found in the unsuitability of these psalms for that purpose: they are not psalms intended for use in the temple. (3) From Psalm xlii. and Isa. xxx. 29 we gather that pilgrimages were made to the temple with songs and instrumental music. Probably the correct view is that these titles reveal to us a collection made for use in these pilgrimages. We should expect such a collection to be made, and this is the only collection we possess.

We conclude, then, that the Psalter was compiled gradually in some such way as we

have outlined, and that the work was completed in the Maccabean period. As it contained psalms suitable for temple ritual, synagogue worship, and national celebrations it suited all parties, and thus supplemented all the previous Psalters and attained universal recognition by the Jews both of East and West. The collector's design in the first book was to bring together the psalms of David. But as some psalms, e.g. xiv. and xxxi., are evidently later than David's time, the compilation was not made by him but by some one who lived after him. Psalms i. and ii. are introductory, and did not belong to the original collection. Bishop Wordsworth suggests that they were placed together by the compiler on a sort of 'catchword' principle because of the occurrence of רֵגֶל ('way') in i. 6, ii. 12; and יְהִי ('meditate') in i. 2 and ii. 1.

The second book also dates after the Captivity, and was compiled from two minor psalters. All the psalms in it, except xlivi. and lxxi., bear titles, and include at least parts of three pre-existent collections. The third

book originated in somewhat the same way, and contains chiefly the psalms entitled Asaph and Sons of Korah. Like the second, it is characterized by the use of Elohim for the divine name. The fourth book, in which Psalm xc. bears the name of Moses, contains psalms that are similar in contents, language, and tone; while the fifth includes the two minor collections to which reference has already been made, the Hallelujah Psalms and the Songs of Degrees.

The special use that is made of the two names for the Almighty should here be emphasized. The word Jehovah (Yahweh) occurs in the first book 272 times, and in the second only 30 times; while the word Elohim is found by itself but 15 times in the first, it occurs 164 times in the second book. In the third the use of the names is about equal; the fourth and fifth books have Yahweh almost exclusively, i.e. 339 times, while Elohim occurs only once or twice. Different explanations have been suggested for these significant uses of the divine names; for they certainly cannot have been acci-

dental. De Wette suggests that the usage is illustrative of the age in which the different psalms were written. Delitzsch makes the distinction an imitation of the Pentateuch. We rather think with Ewald that, as the compilers show considerable variety of usage, their own taste was their guide. Jews of to-day are very chary in their use of the name Yahweh. This habit may throw much light upon the way their ancestors employed the sacred name, and so help us to solve this problem.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE POETRY OF THE PSALMS

The essential quality of the poetry of the Psalter is rhythm—Figurative language of Psalms one of chief characteristics—Environment of Psalmists provided them with metaphors—Their language also suitable for this purpose—Poetry of Psalter largely belongs to early stage of development—Three kinds of Hebrew poetry: lyric, gnomic, and elegiac—De Wette's view—Another character of Hebrew poetry is parallel structure—Length of lines variable—Alternation of thought—The religious emotion expressed by Psalms gives them their greatest charm—The three primary forms of parallelism illustrated; also other kinds—Strophes: their varieties—Acrostic and Alphabetical Psalms—Hebrew poet a sacred one: his poetry eminently fitted to convey religious instruction.

THE form in which the Psalms come to us is that of poetry; the language of earnest men, the only language that has in it the power of permanent impression. Hebrew

poetry, however, is very different from the compositions we know under the name of poetry. It is not characterized, as is ours, by rhyme and metre; its essential quality is rhythm found in the rhythm of thought and balance of clauses when combined in a verse. Thought corresponds to thought in repetition, amplification, contrast, or response. The language of Oriental poetry is highly coloured, hyperbolical, exaggerated; in it we have the theology of the feelings rather than of the intellect. The animated rhythm of the opening words of Psalm ii. vividly suggests 'the tumultuous gathering of the nations,' while the concluding stanza of Psalm iv. is a lullaby, with a rhythm 'as reposeful as the assurance which it expresses.'

The figurative language of the Psalter is one of its chief characteristics. The very environment of the writers, the influences of their climate, the exercises of their worship, the memories of their past, all led them to use this form of speech. Their metaphors are never forced, they are not used with any appearance of stint, and they are such as

influence men in all the varied relations of life in which they are found. Moreover they are sanctified to the highest of purposes, being holy things as well as beautiful. This thought is finely illustrated in the 23rd Psalm, where David's 'Shepherd of Israel' comes into sweet and close relations with the individual soul; while thoughts that were born in his soul, amid the quietude of the lonely hills of Bethlehem, find utterance in the figurative language by which he expresses his constant care of the dumb companions that shared his solitude.

The scenery of Palestine was of such a kind as to develop in its bards the use of figurative language. Here were all the requirements of a land where poetry is born and thrives; small in size, with a scanty population, it demanded constant industry in order to obtain a livelihood. It possesses mountains, forests, and seas with a great variety of fauna and flora; in fact a complete treasury of material symbols such as are required by a poet. These diversities of scenery and varieties in general environment

gave to the Psalmist a fund of metaphors in which to express the results of meditation upon the marvels of earth and sky.

The Hebrew language was most suitable for this purpose. ‘ Destitute of the richness and infinite flexibility of the Greek, the artificial stateliness and strength of the Latin, and the varied resources and borrowed beauties of modern languages, Adam’s tongue—the language of the early giants of the species—was fitted beyond them all for the purposes of lofty poetry.’ There are some writers who would have us believe that the Israelites were a rude and barbarous people; but their literary remains do not bear out this contention. The Psalms prove that, in their use of words to express natural objects, the writers had as great a choice of words as is furnished by the vocabularies of most other tongues ancient or modern.

The Psalter is the Jewish hymn-book of the post-exilic community: their collection of religious songs. Wellhausen and his school affirm that only the profane lyric was known to the early Israelites, and that the religious

lyric is a product of post-exilic times. Dr. Rudolf Kittel,<sup>1</sup> however, maintains that our present knowledge leads us to the opposite view, and that the religious lyric is the older of the two. Evidently the poetry of the Psalter belongs to an early stage of development. Poetry was probably the form in which the earliest literary efforts of the Jews found their expression. Of this we have evidence in the dying charge of Jacob (Gen. xl ix.) ; as well as the songs of Deborah and Barak (Judges v.). The psalteries mentioned in 2 Sam. vi. 5 most likely refer to religious odes which David and all the house of Israel sang to the accompaniment of suitable music as they proclaimed the praises of Yahweh and His holy ark. The religious life of the Jews was as powerful in ancient as in later times, and its varied experiences would be expressed (e.g. the prowess of their heroes and their conquests in battle) in poetical form just as much as, if not more than, in prose.

Three words express the character of

<sup>1</sup> *The Scientific Study of the Old Testament*, 1910, p. 129.

Hebrew poetry: lyric, gnomic, and elegiac. By the first the poet gives expression to personal feelings such as joy and sorrow; or experiences that result from an appreciation of nature or history. Gnomic poetry, which attained to a rich development among the Jews, e.g. the Pilgrim songs, cxx.-cxxxvii., consists of observations on human life and society, or generalizations respecting conduct and character; while elegiac is a rhythmical melodious form of pathetic composition on mournful subjects. Probably the finest illustration of this form of poetry is the superb poem composed by David when he heard of the death of Saul and of Jonathan. Epic and dramatic poetry were not in harmony with the genius of early Jewish life. Little, if any, of the former kind exists; and the latter is only to be found, e.g. Job and Canticles, in a very rudimentary and imperfect form. Many scholars decline to admit the existence of either. The Psalter is a collection of religious lyrics, and lyric poetry is the most ancient that we possess. Davidson affirms that in David it reached its culminating

point; he brought it to a state of perfection.

De Wette terms the Psalter a 'lyric anthology' because it contains the lyric productions of varied authors, and was composed at separate times. The psalms are properly lyric; they give immediate expression to feelings as they arise; they are simple, unstudied, and natural. Some psalms, as the 23rd, are idylls; the greater number, however, are dramatic odes consisting of dialogues between certain persons sustaining particular characters. Then we have one exquisite little group, the Songs of Degrees (or Ascents), of which the meaning is by no means settled. In all probability they existed at one time as a separate hymn-book.

Hebrew poetry is not only distinguished by its rhythm, but also by its parallel structure. Parallelism is the key to the mechanism of Hebrew song. The outward flow of emotion is sometimes checked, and the expressed thought must needs accommodate itself thereto. This is done by means of lines of varied length, in which, however, there are

no definite metres as in most Western poetry. The balance is one of thought, not of sound, the lines being only approximately the same length; hence the poetry can never, like blank verse, degenerate into heavy prose. Budde, quoted in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. iv. p. 4, says: 'In Hebrew especially the end of the lines coincides with a break in the sense, and even the accentuation of our texts is seldom wrong as to the correct division.' This employment of word accents is of ancient origin, as is illustrated in their use by such ancient nations as Assyria and Babylonia.

There is no set rule for the length of these lines; they may be shorter or longer according to the taste of the poet. On an average they consist of seven or eight syllables. When longer they are usually divided by a caesura, as in each line of strophe two of Psalm xxiii., and into two unequal parts. Their composition must show a certain uniform relation to one another, in order that the impression of rhythmic units may be produced. As a rule the clauses of Hebrew poetry are short.

They are seldom longer than three words, often only two. This feature gives a brightness and animation to the thoughts expressed, as in Ps. xxvii. 7 ; which I have translated as follows :

Hear, Yahweh, my voice,  
I cry unto Thee,  
Be gracious and answer.  
To Thee said my heart,  
Thy face, Yahweh, I seek.  
Hide not Thy face from me ;  
Turn not in anger away.

With this compare the more laboured stanzas of Ps. xiii. 1, 2, and the marked contrast will make our statement clear :

How long, O LORD, wilt Thou forget me for ever ?  
How long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me ?  
How long shall I take counsel in my soul,  
Having sorrow in my heart all the day ?  
How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me ?

This peculiarity of parallel lines in Hebrew is usually referred to as ' Parallelismus Membrorum,' or the parallelism of clauses. A plurality of lines, and in most cases two lines only, combine to form the verse. This kind of poetry is found not only in the Psalms,

but in the poetry of all nations, especially in their earlier stages of development. In all minds there is a desire for regular and harmonious movement; this kind of poetry satisfies this desire. Still, we must be careful not to assign too great an importance to metrical regularity.

One interesting use of parallelism is an alternation of thought found in several psalms that, like the backward and forward movements in a dance, is used by the Psalmists to compare and contrast the upper and lower parts of creation. Mr. Gilfillan says: ' 'Mark this in the history of creation. At first there is darkness above and darkness below. Then, as the earth is enlightened, the sky is illumined too; the earth is brought forth from the grave of chaos; the heaven is uplifted in its terrible crystal; and, ere the earth is inhabited, the air is peopled.'

The poetry of the Psalms does not lie in their intrinsic form. They were not composed from the standpoint of art. It is their religious emotion that gives them their greatest

<sup>1</sup> *The Bards of the Bible*, p. 17.

charm. They came spontaneously from the heart of the Psalmist, and are the natural expression of varied experiences. Only in one instance have we a secular song, i.e. the 45th Psalm, which is also a wedding song of quite artificial character. There is much in the Psalter that is of great literary value, e.g. the varying metaphors, the lofty conceptions, the concrete language. But the simple diction and the familiar figures give to the Psalms an attractiveness of their own.

Such passages as the following illustrate this thought :

I will say of the **LORD**, He is my refuge and my fortress ;

My God, in whom I trust (xci. 2).

For Thy lovingkindness is better than life ;

My lips shall praise Thee (lxiii. 3).

For the **LORD** God is a sun and shield :

The **LORD** will give grace and glory :

No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly (lxxxiv. 11).

They unfold a rich experience, a complete devotion, and a sublime confidence that we also should be anxious to enjoy. They touch

chords that vibrate in all our hearts, and we feel that their unique charm is as strong in its influence upon us as it was upon the Israelites of old.

But the very absence of this artistic form increases the sublimity and impressiveness of the Psalter: while its rhythmical character assists the translator in reproducing the thoughts of the writers in a tongue other than the Hebrew. This fact is very apparent in our Revised Version, and can be discerned by the English reader. It shows us why Hebrew poetry loses less in translation than poetry that depends upon rhythm and metre for its beauty and influence. From the standpoint of exegesis this 'law of parallelism' possesses much value: inasmuch as it is often used with great success to determine the connexion of words, to explain their sense, or to decide a doubtful reading. Hence this division of verses into parallel lines is not without importance, and we may use it with considerable advantage to ourselves in our study of the Psalms.

While to Ley, more than to any other

scholar, perhaps excepting Herder, is due the credit of pointing out the true conception of measures in Hebrew poetry, Bishop Lowth<sup>1</sup> established the principle of parallelism, of which he recognized three primary forms. We give specimens of these.

(a) *Synonymous*. The simplest illustration is that of two lines in which the second continues the thought expressed in the first.

O LORD, rebuke me not in Thine anger,  
Neither chasten me in Thy hot displeasure (vi. 1).

There may be three or more lines of parallelism. The following, quoted from Dr. Briggs, is an illustration of three lines. They are synonymous ‘lines of beauty and power written by a real poet.’

O arise, Yahweh, in thine anger ; lift up Thyself in  
outbursts of rage ;  
O rouse Thyself, Yahweh my God, to the judgement  
Thou hast commanded.  
While the congregation of peoples assemble around  
Thee, on high O sit enthroned (vii. 6, 7).

(b) *Synthetic*, where two or more lines are

<sup>1</sup> *De sacra Poesi Heb.* 1753.

logically connected or possess some constructional relation.

I laid me down and slept ;  
 I awaked ; for the LORD sustaineth me (iii. 5).  
 LORD, how are mine adversaries increased !  
 Many are they that rise up against me.  
 Many there be that say of my soul,  
 There is no help for him in God (iii. 1).

(c) Antithetic or contrasted parallelism, in which the thought expressed is emphasized by way of contrast rather than repetition or continuation.

For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous :  
 But the way of the wicked shall perish (i. 6).

Many sorrows shall be to the wicked :  
 But he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass  
 him about.

Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous :  
 And shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart  
 (xxxii. 10, 11).

To these three forms, other three have been  
 added :

(a) Emblematic, in which the main thought  
 is amplified by means of various emblems.

For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me :  
 My moisture was changed as with the drought of sum-  
 mer (xxxii. 4).

(b) Stairlike, where there is an ascending thought expressed by the repetition of the same word.

Give unto the LORD, O ye sons of the mighty,  
Give unto the LORD glory and strength.  
Give unto the LORD the glory due unto His name ;  
Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness (xxix. 1, 2).

(c) Introverted, which takes in the principle of inclusion, and where, whatever be the number of lines, the first runs parallel with the last, the second with the penultimate, and so on.

Break Thou the arm of the wicked ;  
And as for the evil man, seek out his wickedness till  
Thou find none.  
The LORD is king for ever and ever :  
The nations are perished out of His land (x. 15, 16).

Another division of parallelism is into the  
(a) distich (or couplet) :

But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is  
godly for Himself :  
The LORD will hear when I call unto Him (iv. 3).

(b) Tristich (or triplet) :

Thou wilt show me the path of life :  
In Thy presence is fullness of joy ;  
In Thy right hand are pleasures for evermore (xvi. 11).

## (c) Tetrastich (or quatrain):

But the **LORD** sitteth as king for ever :  
He hath prepared His throne for judgement.  
And He shall judge the world in righteousness,  
He shall minister judgement to the people in uprightness (ix. 7, 8).

Longer combinations are also used : for Hebrew poetry is characterized by great freedom, and pulsates with the beautiful variety of a full and vigorous vitality.

Where in Hebrew poetry several verses are connected together by a refrain, as in Psalms xlii., xliii., xlvi., lvi., cxxxvi., &c., or related by similarity of thought, as in Psalm cxix., there is an 'artificial rhythmical structure' to which the name *strophe* has been given. Budde points out that this strophic arrangement is generally taken for granted as self-evident ; but he seriously questions the right to make this assumption. To Koster is usually given the credit of calling the attention of scholars to this strophical character of many of the psalms ; though some before him had called attention to this quality in Hebrew poetry. Strophes vary in

the number of their lines and in combination of parallels. They may be simple or complex. The former kind consists of a few lines of one sort of parallelism, and they tend to a monotonous style; the latter have more lines, and at least two kinds of parallelism. It is usual to combine the several kinds; the result of which is variety of form and general harmony.

The refrains to which reference has just been made are divided into several classes. They are:

(a) Identical in thought and expression, as, e.g. in Psalm xlvi. :

The LORD of hosts is with us;  
The God of Jacob is our refuge.

(b) The thought running through the psalm is the same, but the expression of it varies in the different verses; e.g. Psalm cvii.

(c) Some refrains have a difference both in thought and expression: e.g. Psalm lxxxiv.

(d) Some psalms were composed and arranged for antiphonal singing, e.g. Psalms xx. and xxi.; while others were intended to be

used as solos and choruses. Of this last class Psalm xv. affords a splendid illustration. Here we have a couplet of inquiry to be sung as a solo to which the chorus returns the answer.

Another method by which these strophes (or stanzas) are determined, is their acrostic character. This alphabetic arrangement is little known to English readers except, perhaps, through the 119th Psalm. In the original there are twenty-two strophes, each having eight verses, and each of these verses begins with the same Hebrew letter, i.e. all of the first stanza with **א** and all of the second with **ב**; and so on. Prof. Binnie<sup>1</sup> has arranged Psalm exi. in English, so that this kind of structure may be seen and understood :

Hallelujah !

A dore will I the Lord with all my heart,  
B oth in the meeting of the upright and in the con-  
gregation.

C onfessedly great are the deeds of the Lord ;  
D elighters in them search them out.  
E xcellent for honour and majesty is His work :  
F or evermore doth His righteousness endure.

&c., &c.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Psalms : their History, Teaching and Use*, p. 142.

There are nine alphabetic psalms. These are ix., x., xxv., xxxiv., xxxvii., cxi., cxii., cxix., cxlv. This acrostic form of composition, though it seems artificial, is not a sign of poetical decadence, 'a compensation for the vanished spirit of poetry.' In the Book of Lamentations, which is undoubtedly of earlier date than many of the psalms, we have a convincing proof of the fact. We regard it rather as an evidence of an advanced stage of poetical composition, and that it was used with the aim of being a help to all those who afterward might wish to memorize the Psalter. Besides the lovely little group of psalms called the Songs of Ascents, which have been discussed on p. 60 *et sq.*, the word Selah is said by some to indicate the strophes in a psalm. We regard it as a musical term, and shall therefore prosecute our inquiry into its meaning and use in the next chapter.

Ere we close this chapter, however, we must not omit to note the high moral tone of the Psalms. The Hebrew poet is first and last a sacred one. He was not surprised into religious emotion merely by his circum-

stances; his soul was filled with thoughts of the Infinite One. Wherever he was, either under the starry canopy or under the temple dome, religion with him was a passion that expressed itself in poetry. The sacred song of the Hebrew stands alone: it sprang from nothing earlier than itself, and it did not follow any models. It is unique, and its equal is not likely to be seen again.

Hebrew poetry was eminently fitted to convey religious instruction. Its symbolic language and poetic diction enabled it to be the vehicle of spiritual truth and to unfold the Psalmist's conception of man's relation to his Maker. The Psalms were written with the distinct purpose of illustrating how the divine attributes are employed in the supply of the universal needs of men and the spiritual training of the individual soul. Hence it is that their preciousness has always been so great. They have ever met the requirements of piety, and have satisfied the longings of the human soul for God and divine things.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE MUSIC OF THE PSALMS

The Israelites possessed music—The Psalms were used for liturgical purposes—Character of Hebrew music not advanced—Psalms for the chief Musician—Kinds of musical instruments—Musical directions—Names of tunes—Meaning of Selah and Higgaion.

THE Psalms were composed with the intention of being sung. It is when they are accompanied by suitable music that we most feel their force, their pathos, their sublime truths. Whatever may have been the character of Hebrew music, and that we have now no data to determine, it certainly had the power of affecting the hearts of the people, and so of greatly influencing their conduct. The Books of Chronicles derive their information from early records: they trace the beginnings of organized worship to David. In 2 Chron. vii. 6 we are told

that, at the dedication of Solomon's temple, instruments of music were used in the praises offered to the Almighty; and in chap. xxix. 6, where the reconsecration of the temple by Hezekiah is described, it is written that the Levites stood with the instruments of David and the priests with the trumpets.

Several of the psalms were used for liturgical purposes at the offering of worship and the celebration of festivals. In the title of Psalm xcii. we read that it is 'a Song for the Sabbath day.' This is the only reference to daily psalms in the Hebrew text; but from the Septuagint we learn that at the time of the morning drink-offering each day of the week had its own special psalm. Psalm xxiv. was set apart for the first day of the week, Psalm xlvi. for the second, Psalm xciv. for the third, and Psalm xciii. for the 'day before the Sabbath.' Some psalms were used on sacrificial occasions in the temple, e.g. Psalm c., in the title of which we read 'a Psalm of Thanksgiving'; and Psalm xxx., which is 'a Song at the Dedication of the House': probably the

Feast of Dedication instituted by Judas Maccabaeus 164 B.C. to commemorate the purification of the temple after it had been desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes.

The character of early Hebrew music was probably somewhat rude and inharmonious. The references to it in the Psalter are few and are in general terms; yet they teach us many things in relation to it. Usually 'a simple orchestra of two or four pieces of the lighter string and wind instruments' was employed; the louder music being reserved for the temple courts. On important occasions, a greater number and variety of instruments were used; and one of the chief features of worship appears to have been antiphonal singing. Sometimes the choir would be divided into two parts, each of which would answer the other; while, at other times, the choir would sing the psalm and the people join in the refrain. Of this character of music Psalm cxxxvi. affords an illustration.

Fifty-five psalms are inscribed **לְמַנְנָהָלָה**: 'For the chief Musician, Director, Precentor, or Choirmaster.' The major portion of these

psalms are prayers. So we judge the collection was intended to be used in the Synagogue as a prayer-book. As the name given in the collection to the Supreme Being is Yahweh, it is of Palestinian origin. In 1 Chron. xv. 17-21 we have the key to this subject of the Chief Musician. Heman, Asaph, Jeduthan (or Ethan) were appointed, at the request of David, to conduct the music when the ark was brought from the house of Obed-Edom with sacrifice and dancing. To these three choirmasters a Levitical origin is attributed, Heman being descended from Kohath, Asaph from Gershom, and Ethan from Merari. They modelled the whole organization of the service of praise, and divided the singers into twenty-four courses.

Other musicians ministered in sacred song accompanied by psalteries on Alamoth, and harps on the Sheminith. The former of these two expressions probably means such instruments as savoured of maiden-like tone, i.e. high as compared with the lower pitch of men's voices, which latter character is doubt-

less indicated by the word 'Sheminith.' This latter literally means 'the eighth or octave.' The general idea we are to gather from the words is that of psalteries for the male falsetto, and harps for the bass.

Several musical directions are found in the Psalms. They refer to tones, voices, and musical instruments. The name of the tune is usually indicated by two or three of the first words of some popular melody to which the song could be sung, and which would be well known at the time. This custom has prevailed from ancient times, and is one which we, who speak of 'Miles Lane,' 'Diadem,' 'Nativity,' and 'Ein Feste Burg' as names that remind us of familiar tunes, can understand and appreciate. In our Revised Version a number of these names are simply transliterated: no attempt is made at translation. Some of these names are as follows:

(a) 'al 'Aijeleth hashshachar, עַל־אִיְלָת הַשְׁחָר. 'Hind of the morning.' This title is found in Psalm xxii. The 'al is translated in the Revised Version 'set to the tune of.' This may have been the national anthem of David's

time, and expresses the king's strong confidence in Yahweh. The figure is a very beautiful one: an Oriental word-picture of the rising sun whose effulgent beams dance on the distant horizon as the Dawn Hind.

(b) 'al-tashcheth, תַּשְׁחַת-אַל. 'Destroy not' is found in the titles of four psalms, lvii., lviii., lix., and lxxv., which possess features in common. They are all psalms that speak of adversity in more or less degree. Davison suggests<sup>1</sup> that the words form the beginning of an old vintage song such as is described in Isa. lxv. 8. But are they not more likely to be words used, as in Deut. ix. 29, when, in days of chastisement for sin, the cry has ascended to heaven, 'O Lord God, destroy not ('al-tashcheth) Thy people and Thine inheritance.' These psalms were evidently intended for seasons of humiliation.

(c) 'al-Machalath, תַּחַלָּת. This title is found in Psalms liii. and lxxxviii., and is untranslated in the Revised Version. Where it appears elsewhere in the Old Testament, it is a proper name. Gesenius defines the term

<sup>1</sup> Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. iv. p. 153.

as a catchword giving a name to a tune, or a special kind of song or a musical instrument. Delitzsch explains the meaning as referring to the sadness of the melody to which the psalm was sung. The Greek version of Aquila renders *ἐπὶ χορείᾳ*, 'on a dancing.' This leads us to look in the life of David for some event where, in intense experiences as the result of national victories, the general rejoicings would be such as to harmonize with the statements of this psalm. Such a circumstance is found in the slaying of Goliath by the son of Jesse. Machalath has Le'annoth (לְעָנוֹת) united with it in Psalm lxxxviii. The meaning is 'shoutings,' and points out the chanting songs of the dancers in some event as the return of the Ark of the Testimony from the house of Obed-Edom.

(d) 'al Muth-labben, עַל-מִתְהַלֵּבָן (Psalm ix.). These words suggest 'dying for the son.' But they will not apply to the death of Absalom, even if such an explanation were appropriate. The Jewish paraphrase, known as the Targum, gives the title 'Regarding the death of the man who came out between the

camps.' If this explanation be accepted, the psalm may be regarded as having reference to the slaying of Goliath the Philistine.

(e) 'al Yonath elem Rechokim, עליוןת אלם רחוקם (Psalm lvi.). The meaning of this title is very obscure, and it is usually translated 'The dove of the distant Terebinths.' It is regarded as the beginning of some poem to the air of which this psalm was to be set.

Two kinds of musical instruments are mentioned in the Psalms, viz. stringed and wind, to which the general terms 'Neginoth' and 'Nechiloth' are respectively applied (see Psalms iv., v., &c.). There are two stringed instruments: the 'Kinnor,' the most ancient kind of harp, probably a lyre, a light and simple instrument upon which a performer could play as he walked; and the 'Nebel,' most likely an improved and larger lyre, somewhat resembling our present harp. Both these instruments are referred to in Pss. lvii. 8 and lxxxi. 2, &c. Among wind instruments we find mentioned the 'Shophar' (Ps. xcvi. 6), a long trumpet curved or rounded at the end; and the 'Chatsotserah,'

a straight silver trumpet terminating in a bell mouth. Illustrations of this latter instrument are portrayed on the arch of Titus at Rome. It was a sacred rather than a martial instrument, being used by the priests for the purpose of giving signals. To these two kinds another class of musical instruments must be added, that of instruments of percussion. These are the 'cymbals' (Ps. cl. 5) and the 'Toph,' the timbrel of Ps. lxxxii. 2, which is probably used here in place of the cymbal.

There have been handed down from ancient times two words that evidently refer to musical accompaniment. They are named respectively 'Selah' and 'Higgaion,' and are technical terms the precise meaning of which is unknown. The word סֶלָה (selah) occurs seventy-one times in the Psalter, never at the beginning but only during the progress and at the end of psalms. In the Septuagint it occurs more frequently, and is rendered by διάψαλμα (diapsalma), which signifies a rest or pause. It was first attached to the Psalter of the Mizmorim. The idea of rest or pause

is in harmony with the derivation of Gesenius, which, however, is based upon an etymological error, inasmuch as it comes from **לִלְאָ** (salal, lift up) and not **שָׁלָה** = **שָׁלָה** (salah, suspend, i.e. rest, pause). These letters **ש** and **ד** were not interchangeable in early Hebrew: at the time when many of the psalms, in which the word occurs, were written.

Calmet suggests that the word Selah was put by the early Hebrew musicians in the margin of their Psalter to show where the tune ended. Others, again, regard it as an instruction to the musicians to 'strike up' with an interlude while the singers had a rest. Rabbi Kimchi says that it is both a musical note and at the same time a note of emphasis worthy of our best attention. Thirtle says<sup>1</sup> that the etymology of the word is not so necessary to understand as its purpose; and he concludes that, as the days of systematic punctuation had not arrived, and ancient writing was without break or division, Selah was employed to serve the purpose of the modern (¶) paragraph. He suggests that the

<sup>1</sup> *The Titles of the Psalms*, p. 145.

word, standing in the midst of poems, was 'designed to divide them off into sections,' and that its proper place is at the opening of a stanza.

Prof. Briggs affirms that Selah was an abbreviation of psalms in liturgical use, and marks an interlude where the closing benediction might be sung. He suggests that the rendering of the Seventy (Interlude), and the Palestinian tradition ( $\epsilon i \varsigma \tau \circ \tau \acute{e} \lambda \circ \varsigma$  = for ever) which gives the last word of the benediction, practically yield the same meaning. Probably the last word that has been written on Selah traces its derivation from the Greek word  $\psi \acute{a} \lambda \lambda \epsilon$  (Psalle = play the instruments) and is exactly parallel to the Italian derivation of *cres.*, *dim.*, &c., when used by English musicians. Prof. F. C. Burkitt tells us<sup>1</sup> that Selah is a word foreign to the Hebrew language, as is proved (1) because no natural derivation can be found for it; and (2) because the accent, contrary to rule, is on the final syllable. But, as far as we know, the instruments did not usually accompany the sacred song.

<sup>1</sup> *Interpreter*, October 1911, p. 99.

Furthermore this theory that Selah is equivalent to psalle is unsuitable for such passages as Ps. xxxii. 4, 5 :

For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me :  
My moisture was changed as with the drought of summer. Selah.

I acknowledge my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid.

We conclude, then, that the word denotes a musical interlude, and probably also points out the place where the worshippers should join together in the doxology and the closing benediction be sung. It may also eventually be found that the use of the term varied in different periods and districts.

The meaning of הִגְיָה, Higgaion, is by no means clear. The word is found in three Psalms, viz. ix. 16, xix. 14, xcii. 3. In our Revised Version it is translated 'meditation' in the second passage, and with this use of the word Kimchi agrees. 'Solemn sound' is the rendering in the third passage. In Ps. ix. 16 it is found with Selah as a sort of rubrical direction, and it is translated by the Seventy ωδή διαψάλματος ; but whether the direction

is to the congregation to meditate for awhile on the most important truths to which they have just listened, or to the choir to play a soft strain of meditative music, it is impossible to say. In Isa. xvi. 7, 'Higgaion' is used of a mourner; in xxxi. 4 of a lion; in xxxviii. 14 of a dove, and is derived from הִגְיָה, 'to murmur, have a deep tone.' Keil, in his *Einleitung* (p. 338), indicates that it is equivalent to our musical 'piano'; while Davidson affirms that it refers to 'loud, noisy music,' and is similar to our fortissimo. Cheyne seems to have the same idea when in Ps. xcii. 3 he renders it 'with sounding music upon the harp.' The references in the psalms given above, however, do not bear out the latter contention.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE TITLES OF THE PSALMS

Titles the result of editorial work—Orphan Psalms—The nature of the inscriptions varied—Thirtle's Key—Views of the early Fathers—Several titles not genuine—The value of the titles—Titles that indicate authorship—Descriptive titles, Musical, Liturgical.

To all the psalms, save thirty-four, titles or inscriptions have been prefixed. To these thirty-four that possess no title the name 'Orphans' has been given. They are i., ii., x., xxxiii., xlili., lxxi., xci., xciii.—xcvii., xcix., civ.—cvii., cxi.—cxix., cxxxv.—cxxxvii., cxlvii.—cl. By the later Jews these were connected with the psalms that preceded them, and were attributed to the same author. In that way 'parents' were said to be provided for them. This custom may explain why so many psalms in the first book are ascribed to David

in their titles ; and how, in the course of years, the whole book was known by his name.

These titles were no part of the earliest texts. They were added at a subsequent date, and are the result of editorial work. They often throw much light upon the history of the Psalter. To discover their meaning much effort has been expended upon them in more recent times. Assured success can only be obtained along the lines of Bible study, i.e. style, references, &c., rather than speculative criticism.

The nature of these inscriptions is very varied. Sometimes they refer to the character or contents of the psalms ; at other times to their author, or the historical occasion which led to their composition. They were also used to indicate the manner in which the musical parts of the temple services were to be conducted. By many they have been regarded as parts of the psalms to which they are prefixed, and as necessary to understand them. Others have looked upon them as subsequent additions, and of little if any value in the elucidation of the text.

Thirtle, in his volume on *The Titles of the Psalms*, taking the poem of Habakkuk iii. as his model, asserts that he has found the key to explain all titles. He affirms that there has been a displacement of the Chief Musician line, and that the proper place of the line is at the conclusion of the psalm. ‘Through an unfortunate error,’ he says, ‘it has in every case been placed at the beginning of the psalm following that to which it rightly belongs,’ and this error has led to great confusion of thought and has baffled explanation for the past two thousand years. We confess that this theory is possible, and that there is a certain attractiveness about it, but it does not work out universally in practice when applied to the psalms themselves.

Several of the early Fathers, e.g. Augustine and Hilary, allow that a number of inscriptions have no connexion with the psalm to which they are prefixed; and in some cases they mislead as to the meaning. This thought must not, however, influence us to ignore the whole: for some are canonical parts of the psalms, and help us to understand

their purpose and literary value. Some of the historical notices in the titles are confirmed by the statements to be found in the historical books; and it must always be borne in mind that it was a practice among Oriental poets to prefix their names to poems composed by them.

Still, it must be acknowledged that several of the titles are not genuine, and are not in harmony with the statements made in the body of the psalms. Take e.g. the 52nd Psalm. The title states 'To the Chief Musician, Maskil of David: when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said unto him, David is come to the house of Ahimelech.' The details of the psalm do not agree with the circumstances of the persons named. 'Both internal and external evidence make such a time of composition impossible.' The circumstances are given to us in 1 Samuel xxii., from which we learn nothing about 'abundance of riches' (Ps. lii. 9), while the term used for mighty men means 'tyrant,' &c., and is hardly applicable to Doeg. The wrong use of the tongue, which is denounced in the

psalm, could apply to an early period, or even Persian influence. Prof. Briggs says that language and style favour a pre-exilic date, and he relegates it to the time of Jeremiah.

Many of the psalms ascribed to David have references that can only relate to a later time than the age in which he lived. Some indicate an intensity of spiritual experience, and an advanced condition of religious knowledge, such as he can hardly be supposed to have possessed, and there are statements made in certain psalms (see lxviii. 4 with Isa. xl. 3, and lix., which apparently refers to the Captivity) ascribed to him that can only have had their origin at a later date. As an example of this note Ps. li. 18, 19 :

Do good in Thy good pleasure unto Zion ;  
Build Thou the walls of Jerusalem.

Then shalt Thou delight in the sacrifices of righteousness, in burnt-offering and whole burnt-offering :  
Then shall they offer bullocks upon Thine altar.

These lines are not a late addition, but are necessary to the completion of the strophe. They express the 'historical situation of the poet,' and are more applicable to the time of

Nehemiah than to any of the incidents of David's life.

The titles prefixed to the Psalms are not without a certain value. They afford us, at least, a threefold benefit. They evidence the source whence many of the psalms were derived ; they give information as to the stages of growth through which the Psalter has passed ; and in some cases they yield correct knowledge concerning their date and composition. Seventy-three psalms have יְהוָה (ledavid) in their titles which are thus ascribed to him ; but the contents of many of these psalms show unmistakably that he was not the author. The titles may point, as we believe they do, to the fact that these psalms were early gathered in a collection, or collections, and were referred to generally by the name of the 'Sweet Psalmist of Israel' (see Heb. iv. 7), just as we to-day speak of the whole Psalter as the Psalms of David.

It is not without its significance that the Psalms are grouped together in various books very much in harmony with their titles. The psalms in books 1-3 have the names of

authors prefixed; those of books 4 and 5 are chiefly anonymous. These titles are often of late date, and form no part of the original psalm. Yet they are worthy of our study, as they disclose the views of the early compilers in its most reliable form, and so represent the earliest opinions we possess on the subject. Intimations as to authorship cannot lightly be set aside. When a psalm, e.g., bears the name of David, it is quite reasonable on our part to ascertain from the evidences available whether it was actually composed by him or not.

David was, with all his faults, a deeply religious man. His contemporaries regarded him both as a military and literary genius. He possessed the true poetic temperament, as is clear from the description given of him in 1 Sam. xvi. 12: 'He was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to.' The words so translated give us the conception of a youth of fair complexion with golden hair and lovely eyes, large and liquid, as became a poet. As we have seen, he was the founder of Hebrew psalmody;

and as we possess one of his compositions of undoubted genuineness in 2 Sam. i. 17, we have a criterion by which we may judge any of the psalms in the title of which his name appears as the author. By this means we regard, e.g., the latter part of the 24th Psalm (vs. 7-10) as referring to David's time. It is a grand triumphal choral, and, at the same time, a splendid specimen of Hebrew anti-phonal music.

Lift up your heads, O ye gates ;  
And be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors :  
And the King of glory shall come in.  
Who is the King of glory ?  
The LORD strong and mighty,  
The LORD mighty in battle.  
Lift up your heads, O ye gates ;  
Yea, lift them up, ye everlasting doors :  
And the King of glory shall come in.  
Who is this King of glory ?  
The LORD of hosts,  
He is the King of glory.

Beside the titles that indicate authorship, to which reference has already been made, there are others that may be divided into three kinds.

1. *Descriptive*

(a) Lelammed. לְלִמֵּד is part of the title of Psalm ix. It signifies 'to teach,' and by comparing Deut. xxxi. 19 with 2 Sam. i. 18 we conclude that it was intended to be committed to memory and recited upon public occasions.

(b) Maskil, מְשִׁלֵּשׁ. This title is found in thirteen psalms. The word comes from שָׁלֵל with the prefix מ and signifies 'to contemplate, consider,' &c. Psalms xxxii., xlii.-xlv., lii.-lv., lxxviii., lxxxviii., cxlii. are meditative, instructive poems. They are of early date and were collected together in the late Persian period.

(c) Miktam. מִכְתָּם is formed from מִתְּמָמָה, gold, and the prefix, as in Maskil. The title is applied to a collection of six psalms, viz. xvi., lvi.-lx. inclusive, which are of early origin. Luther calls them 'golden psalms.' Their style is vigorous, and they express intense emotions; they are 'artistic in form and choice in their contents.'

(d) Shigmaion. שִׁגְגָּיֹן (Psalm vii.) has been

derived from **שָׁאַה**, to wander. It has been suggested that it was composed by David when he was 'wandering': fleeing from Saul; or it is a song composed with a view to render comfort in times of sorrow and distress. But from etymology, tradition, or the character of the psalms we cannot obtain any certain clue to the exact meaning of the word.

(e) Shir. **שִׁיר** is the usual word for song or ode, and is used of secular as well as sacred songs. It occurs thirty times in the titles, often preceded or followed by **מִזְמֹר** (Mizmor). In the title of Psalm xlv. we have **שִׁיר יְדִידּוֹת** (Song of Loves). This is not a feminine plural form referring to king's daughters, as Hengstenberg affirms, it is a neuter abstract. It suggests how a holy earthly love may prepare the way for a still higher affection.

(f) Song of Ascents, **שָׁר הַמְּעֻלָּה**. This is the name of the collection of beautiful pilgrim songs which has been discussed on page 60 et. sqq. The Septuagint translates the phrase by *ῳδὴ τῶν ἀναβαθμῶν*, and the Vulgate by Canticum graduum.

(g) Jeduthan, יְהֻדָּתָן (Psalms xxxix., lxii., lxxvii). After the manner of Jeduthan (R.V.). From 1 Chron. xvi. 41 we learn that this was the name of one of David's chief musicians. It has been suggested that these psalms were set to a melody called after him, or composed by him. But may it not have reference to a third choir? In 1 Chron. xv. 16-22, we read that David asked the chief of the Levites to appoint choirs and orchestras; and that Asaph, Heman, and Ethan were appointed as leaders. But in chap. xvi. 41 Jeduthan is mentioned with Heman, as if Jeduthan were another name for Ethan; and in chap. xxv. 1 we read of them as musical guilds 'to prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals.' The specific work of Jeduthan's choir was chap. xxv. 3, to prophesy in giving thanks and praising the Lord.

(h) Tephillah, תְּפִילָה = prayer. This title is found in four psalms, xvii., lxxxvi., xc., cxlii. In the first two it has joined to it the name of the writer; in the latter two it is without. It signifies a poem addressed to the Almighty.

(i) Tehillah, תְהִלָּה = praise. This title is prefixed to Psalm cxlv., and includes in its meaning all kinds of hymns.

## 2. *Musical*

(a) 'Alamoth. על-עֲלָמָות (Psalm xlvi.) is derived by Gesenius from עלְמָתָה, damsel, whence it would mean accompanied by female voices, i.e. soprano, or the falsetto of boys. Thirtle refers it to a female choir in the temple precincts. Wellhausen explains 'with Elamite instruments,' and Rashi understands it as referring to a musical instrument such as our violin.

(b) Gittith, עַל-הַגִּתִּית (Psalms viii., lxxxi., lxxxiv.). This is said by the Targums to signify a musical instrument brought by David from Gath. The word is derived from גַת, winepress. It may indicate a tune which was set to a vintage song; or it may mean that the psalm was to be sung at the ingathering of the harvest, i.e. the Feast of Tabernacles. It was read as a plural by the Seventy, who translated it ὑπὲρ τῶν ληνῶν,

‘concerning the winepress.’ With this rendering the Vulgate is in agreement in its translation ‘pro Torcularibus.’

(c) Neginoth. **עֲלֵנִים** is prefixed to Psalms iv., vi., liv., lv., lxi., lxxvi., and refers to stringed instruments of music to be played by the fingers. The title may be a direction to the Chief Musician, or may indicate the style of music that was to be employed in the rendering of the psalm.

(d) Nechiloth. **אַל-נְחִילֹת** (Psalm v.) is the complement of Neginoth, and has reference to wind instruments, though Baethgen regards it as the name of a tune. Dr. Briggs calls it a morning prayer ‘for flute-playing.’ It is derived from **לִלְתָ**.

(e) Sheminith. **עַל-קָשְׁמִינִית** (Psalms vi. and xii.) has been supposed to refer to an ‘octochord’ or harp of eight strings. It is translated in the Septuagint *ὑπὲρ τῆς ὁδόντς*, ‘upon the eighth.’ More recently it has been regarded as referring to the voice, and indicating bass singers. In 1 Chron. xv. 21 it is used in contradistinction to the word **עַלְמֹת** and consequently may designate a male choir.

(f) Shushan - eduth, Shoshannim - eduth,  
שׁוּשָׁן עֲלֵשָׁנִים עֲדִית (Psalms lx., lxxxix., lv., lxix.). These titles are said by Rashi to refer to an instrument of six strings. But this suggestion has been replaced by the more likely view that tunes are meant. Hence as Shoshannim means lilies which speak of spring, these psalms would be sung at this season of the year, and specially at the feast of the Passover. This leads us to notice the third class to which, perhaps, these and the Gittith psalms also belong.

### 3. *Liturgical*

(a) Le'yon Hashhabath, לְיּוֹם הַשְׁבָּת. Certain psalms were assigned to particular days of the week. The 92nd Psalm, in which this title occurs, was used on the Sabbath day. This is the only reference in the Hebrew text to any appointment of psalms for daily reading: though the Septuagint affords several other illustrations.

(b) Le'thodah, לְתֹזְבָּה. Psalm c. is a psalm of thanksgiving designed to be used on sacri-

ficial occasions when thanks were rendered to the Almighty for blessings received.

(c) Shir chanukath habayith, שִׁיר חֲנֻכַת הַבַּיִת (A Song at the Dedication of the House). This is the title of Psalm xxx., and may have been used at the re-dedication of the temple in the time of Judas Maccabaeus, B.C. 164, after it had been desecrated by Antiochus (1 Macc. iv. 59; John x. 22).

(d) Lehazkir, לְהִזְכִּיר (To bring to remembrance). This title is prefixed to Psalms xxxviii. and lxx. It probably indicates that they were sung at the time of the offering of incense. The Seventy has *εἰς ἀνάμνησιν περὶ σαββάτου*, thus particularly defining its liturgical use as for the Sabbath.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE CONCEPTION OF DEITY

The theology of the Psalter—The Eternal is revealed by many names—El, Eloah, Elohim, Shaddai, Elyon, Adonai, Yahweh—These names often used interchangeably—God a personal Being—Limitations of personality—Attributes of Deity—Anthropomorphic terms—The Almighty works through nature for the good of man.

No one can read the Psalter without realizing its religious character. It meets the needs of man's highest nature, and enables him to express, as nothing else has done, his deepest experiences in relation to God and divine things. St. Basil has said, *'Εν ψαλμοῖς ἔνι θεολογία τελία* (In the Psalms we have a perfect theology). It is that we may learn somewhat of the details of this theology that we turn now to some of the profound truths it

unfolds. Naturally, here as elsewhere in the Scriptures, the first doctrine with which we meet is the existence of a Supreme Being. Nowhere is this fact argued, but it is everywhere taken for granted, as in Ps. xciv. 9. He that planted the ear, formed the eye, and gave understanding to the creature is Himself a reality and intelligent.

By many names God is revealed to us in the Psalms. They are all helpful in the understanding of His character. To a Jew a name was much more significant than it is to us ; and this fact must not be forgotten in our study of this subject. Three kindred names are applied to Him: El, Eloah, Elohim. They are all translated 'God' in the Authorized Version. These words appear to express the same idea. The first, which is the primitive name and signifies power, may be the origin of the third ; or this last, which is a plural and expresses the perfection and glory of the divine nature, may be derived from its singular, Eloah (אֱלֹהָה), which represents God as the proper object of worship as in Ps. xlv. 6 and 7.

לֵא as the simple elementary form sets forth the might of God, and is sometimes used in combination with other divine names ; while אלהים is the general name employed in the Hebrew Scriptures for the Eternal. One peculiarity in connexion with its use is that, while plural in form, it is joined to a singular verb when it refers to the Almighty. It is sometimes used in a secondary sense, and is applied to angels, judges, &c. Its proper meaning is the Self-Existent One, who reveals Himself to His creatures as their Ruler and Lord.

Of the two archaic names Shaddai (שָׁדָי) and 'Elyon (עֶלְיוֹן), the former is always rendered Almighty. It occurs only twice in the Psalter (lxviii. 15, xci. 1). It is connected with a root that signifies breast, and its meaning may be expressed by the word bountiful. It indicates the fullness and the richness of the blessings that God is ever bestowing upon His people. It is used twice in the Psalms in combination with לֵא. Elyon is translated 'Most High.' The word is used to represent the excellency of God, His absolute supremacy,

and the fact of His peculiar residence in the highest heaven. It occurs several times in the Psalms, e.g. xviii. 13; and it is used in conjunction with הָנָה in lxxviii. 35, where the Revised Version renders it 'Most High God'; also with Yahweh in Ps. i. 17 (LORD Most High) and Elohim in Pss. vii. 3 and lxxviii. 56.

Adonai (אֲדוֹנָי). This divine name is usually rendered Lord, and denotes the dominion of God as Lord. In Psalm cx. it signifies the Supporter and Judge of all creatures. The termination of the word may be an ancient plural form. In the Jewish Encyclopaedia it is said to be the plural form of Adon, i.e. Lord or Lordship. Adonai is used in the Psalter with other divine names as, e.g., in Ps. xxxviii. 15, with Elohai, 'My Lord and my God.' The Jews use the vowel-points of this word in writing the Ineffable Name of the Almighty, for which by this means they express their profound reverence. 'Originally an appellation of God, the word became a definite title; and when the Tetragram became too holy for utterance. Adonai was substi-

tuted for it, so that, as a rule, the Name written YHWH receives the points of Adonai, and is read Adonai except in cases where Adonai precedes or succeeds it in the text, when it is read Elohim and Chateph-segol וְ is pointed under the ' as יְהֹוָה.'

Yahweh (Jehovah), יְהֹוָה, is a personal name and signifies essential and absolute being. It is called a Tetragram (YHWH). It unites what we understand as present, past, and future in one eternal now. It is the name for the Divine Being that is used so largely in the first book of the Psalter, and sets forth the unswerving principles of mercy and judgement which characterize all the actions of the Eternal. It is sometimes united with other divine names. The opinions of learned men differ as to the origin, meaning, and pronunciation of the word Yahweh. The rendering of the word by the letters Jehovah is said, in the Jewish Encyclopaedia, to be a mispronunciation introduced by a Christian theologian 1520 A.D. and that it is almost entirely disregarded by the Jews because it is grammatically impossible. This divine Name has

a shorter form, Yah (־יְהָ), which occurs thirty-five times in the Psalter; e.g. lxxxix. 8 :

O LORD God of Hosts,  
Who is a mighty one, like unto Thee, O YAH ?

With the expression Hallelujah, i.e. Praise ye Yah, we are all familiar. It is the term used in the sixteen psalms that form the collection of Hallels, or songs of praise, that was made for the temple service in the Greek period.

These names used in the Psalter for the Supreme Being are often used interchangeably, as in the 86th Psalm, where the three names Yahweh, Elohim, and Adonai are used several times; and in those prayers where 'without perceptibly altering the meaning, either of these might take the place of either of the others.' The influence of these names is cumulative; unitedly they present us with a full-orbed conception of Deity, as He was understood and known in the times of the writers of the psalms. Here we meet with clearness of ideas and vividness of description. It is because of their unique presentation of the character of God that these lyric poems

are so highly esteemed and have exerted so great an influence on the hearts and lives of succeeding generations.

In the Psalms we are taught that God is a personal Being, One that is self-conscious with will and purpose : a fact that in these days of spiritism it is needful we should ever bear in mind. The greatest service that the Psalter has rendered to the world is the preservation of the personality of Yahweh. The psalms have enshrined in imperishable phrases of exquisite beauty and grandeur this profound truth ; so necessary to the ages, and one that can never be superseded but only enriched with the progress of the years. There can be no personal religion without a personal God ; and perhaps nowhere more than in the Psalter is this great fact emphasized. This truth is finely illustrated in Ps. xxviii. 7 :

The LORD is my strength and my shield ;  
My heart hath trusted in Him, and I am helped :  
Therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth ;  
And with my song will I praise Him.

The Psalmist knew nothing of metaphysical

problems arising from the limitations of personality such as face us in these days. Monism was unknown to him, and it appears untrue to fact with us. Man's personality may be, yea, is, restricted to a limited extension in space because of the human body which he possesses ; but it is surely the height of absurdity to argue therefrom that the personality of God who is a Spirit is limited in a similar manner. As Dr. Momerie<sup>1</sup> says, 'The consciousness of an infinite personality is very different from the consciousness of a finite personality.' The Psalmist's conception of Yahweh was very personal, and his experience harmonized with his faith. To him God is known in His relation to the human spirit. He reveals Himself in His continued providence, as well as in the close relationship into which He brings His righteous ones. It is this fact that led the Psalmist to sing of the mercies of the Lord, and to make known with his mouth the divine faithfulness to all generations (Ps. lxxxix. 1).

The Supreme Being of the Psalter is not a

<sup>1</sup> *Belief in God*, p. 84.

great Power that is eternally unconscious ; but One who knows and thinks and wills, One concerning whom he could write :

I laid me down and slept ;  
I awaked ; for the LORD sustaineth me (Ps. iii. 5).

To whom ' he could pour out his heart ' as in Ps. v. 1 and 2 :

Give ear to my words, O LORD,  
Consider my meditation.

Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King and my God :

For unto Thee do I pray.

And whose glory he could magnify in some such words as the following from Ps. viii. 9 :

O LORD, our Lord,  
How excellent is Thy name in all the earth !

The nations surrounding the Israelites believed in personal gods, the great differences between the two being not so much in their conception of personality as in the character of the objects of their worship.

In the Psalter we have references to several attributes, and their variety corresponds to a reality in the Eternal. God is revealed to

us through His attributes, and the Psalms are especially rich in their unfolding of this fact. As we try to understand their nature we find that they are never in antagonism, but supplement and enrich each other. The safeguard of truth is in this harmony. If we fail to emphasize all attributes equally we detract from the perfections of Him in whom every attribute has its supreme existence and manifestation. Holiness and love are fundamental to the nature of Yahweh. He is the Holy One of Israel (Ps. lxxi. 22) :

He sent redemption unto His people ;  
He hath commanded His covenant for ever :  
Holy and reverend is His name (Ps. cxi. 9).

The righteousness of God to the Psalmist was ever pre-eminent, but it is always blended with mercy. It is an everlasting righteousness, and His law is the truth (cxix. 142), while His mercy endureth continually (lii. 1). The Psalmist never tried to show how, in the evolution of divine purposes, all things worked together for good to those that love God ; but his faith in the fact never wavered,

and his soul received satisfaction from his faith. He was convinced that

Great is the Lord and mighty in power ;  
His understanding is infinite (cxlvi. 5).

And to this divine knowledge of all events he conjoined the thought,

Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that hath He done,  
In heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deeps  
(cxxv. 6).

The essential eternity of God is expressed with real poetic genius in Ps. cii. 24-27. Faith in the divine eternity is a truth that the human mind demands as a necessary condition of religious thought. God is everywhere present. He is near them that revere Him (Ps. lxxxv. 91-4). He is in all places, things and times, as the 139th Psalm declares, using unbounded power, infinite knowledge, and perfect wisdom for the well-being of all.

The LORD is good to all ;  
And His tender mercies are over all His works (cxlv. 9).

In revealing to us the divine character the Psalmist uses very vivid expressions, and often employs bold metaphors that in present-

day language is termed anthropomorphic. Phrases are used that ascribe to God human parts, and that make Him capable of human passions and emotions, e.g.

Awake, why sleepest Thou, O Lord ?  
 Arise, cast us not off for ever.  
 Wherefore hidest Thou Thy face,  
 And forgettest our affliction and our oppression ?  
 (xli. 23, 24).

O God, when Thou wentest forth before Thy people,  
 When Thou didst march through the wilderness ;  
 The earth trembled (lxviii. 7, 8).

For they provoked Him to anger with their high places,  
 And moved Him to jealousy with their graven images  
 (lxxviii. 58).

Part of the difficulty that some men have felt in this kind of diction disappears when we remember that the language is anthropopathic as well as anthropomorphic : that it is used only as an accommodation to human infirmity, and that the Eternal Unchangeable Yahweh comes down to the level of man's understanding :

With the merciful Thou wilt show Thyself merciful ;  
 With the perfect man Thou wilt show Thyself perfect ;  
 With the pure Thou wilt show Thyself pure ;

And with the perverse Thou wilt show Thyself froward  
(xviii. 25, 26).

As Dr. W. B. Pope<sup>1</sup> says, 'The Old Testament anthropopathy may be an anticipation of New Testament reality.' It is difficult to conceive any other method than the one adopted by the Psalmist by means of which his relations with God could have been expressed. Clothing God with the attributes of human nature was the only means he could employ to make known and maintain, in the hearts of his countrymen, a belief in the personality of Deity with whom communion could be enjoyed and from whom all needed blessings could be received. We may smile at these 'mythic elements'; but they give us, in a popular form, the really positive revelation of the divine nature. No one finds his ideas of the divine majesty lowered by them; while the more we become in tune with the Infinite the greater does the true value of these terms appear in bringing God near to us and affording us correct language in which to give joyous expression to

<sup>1</sup> *Compendium of Christian Theology*, vol. i. p. 329.

our faith. As an illustration of this thought let us note Ps. xvi. 8 and 9 :

I have set the **LORD** always before me :  
Because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.  
Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth :  
My flesh also shall dwell in safety.

To the Psalmist God and the world are distinct. The Almighty created the world, and continues to maintain the order of its processes. He works through nature for the benefit of man. There is one phrase in the Psalter that is very illuminating in its suggestion that the Psalmist possessed much knowledge of nature's inner workings. In Ps. xxxvii. 35 he speaks of a green tree spreading itself 'in its native soil.' But, with him, nature is only a means to an end. The natural reveals the spiritual. Behind the storm, that he so vividly describes, he sees Yahweh sitting as king, for ever giving strength to His people and blessing them with peace (xxix. 10 and 11).

There are six psalms, viz. viii., xix., xxix., lxv., xciii., civ., that are priceless to all lovers of nature. They all declare the glory of

God, and the burden of them is ‘ Bless the Lord, O my soul ’ ; for

He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle,  
And herb for the service of man ;  
That He may bring forth food out of the earth :  
And wine that maketh glad the heart of man,  
And oil to make his face to shine,  
And bread that strengtheneth man’s heart. (civ. 14, 15)

The 8th Psalm discloses to us how the Divine Omnipotence provided for the needs of man whom He made but little lower than Himself, and then bestowed upon him the unique power of using, for his own continued requirements, the wonderful blessings with which he had been enriched. The underlying conception of this psalm is that of wonder ; and this is the basis of all devotion, as it is also of all poetry and philosophy. The same is true, in varied degree, of all the other Nature Psalms. Hence with the Psalmist we recognize, and delight to acknowledge, the truths so beautifully expressed by him in the 104th Psalm (v. 24) :—

O LORD, how manifold are thy works !  
In wisdom hast Thou made them all :  
The earth is full of Thy riches.

## CHAPTER X

### IDEAS ABOUT MAN

God man's Creator—The nature of man—Experience the basis of religion—Many psalms penitential—The influence of the Psalter on the Apostle Paul—Expressions of self-righteousness: how explained—The divine providence over the nation and individuals—The problem of sin and its punishment—Angels used as agents in fulfilling God's purposes—The patriotism expressed in the Psalms—The prayer for old age.

SOME years ago a great scientist startled the world with the cry 'Eureka,' and we were asked to believe that he had at last found the secret of life's origin. But Dr. Dallinger, by careful experiments, proved that the cry was mistaken, and that the origin of life was as great a secret as ever. Darwin had previously attempted to solve the same problem by seeking to minimize the difference between

the material and the immaterial; but with no better success.<sup>1</sup> That which modern science has attempted was accomplished centuries ago by the writer of the 36th Psalm. He found a principle in the universe that may be recognized as the ultimate source of all things: that with God is the fountain of life (v. 9). The reasoning by which the Psalmist reached his conclusion was based upon the most familiar fact of human experience—a fact that modern science has neither explained nor refuted.

The Psalter presents man as small in relation to himself: as is illustrated by the shortness of his life, his feebleness, misery, and sin. But he is great in his relations with God. He is created in the divine image, is an object of divine care, and has been endowed with a moral nature. This view is in harmony with the teachings of modern science. The Ptolemaic system of astronomy is dead, and that of Copernicus reigns in its stead. But while man has lost his position as the exclusive centre of universal nature, he has

<sup>1</sup> Matheson's *Psalmist and Scientist*, p. 88.

regained that position in combination with all other things. As Dr. Matheson says, 'The paradox of the Psalmist remains the paradox of the evolutionist; and the latter must ask his universe, as the former asked his God, "What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? And the son of man that Thou visitest him?" (viii. 4).'

The Psalmist makes experience the basis of religious life. To him religion was not a mere philosophy, but a personal experience. 'The element of experience in the Bible is its most valuable feature,' Prof. Peake said recently, at a meeting of Free Church ministers in Liverpool. There is a tendency in these modern days to minimize the personal element in the Psalms; but there are several psalms, e.g. iii., iv., vi., xviii., in which its presence is unquestionable.

    Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
    And renew a right spirit within me (li. 10).

This was the burden of the Psalmist's constant cry. And this psalm has mirrored the experience and expressed the aspirations of

godly men and women ever since his day. Some writers, e.g. W. R. Smith, Driver, and Cheyne, are satisfied to regard this 51st Psalm 'as a prayer for the restoration of Israel in the mouth of a prophet of the Exile.' But such a view 'runs counter to traditional exegesis, and fails to do justice to the language of the psalm.'

Many psalms are penitential in their character: their contents agree with the name. But the term is generally restricted to seven psalms, viz. vi., xxxii., xxxviii., li., cii., cxxx., and cxlii. Five of these are, by their titles, assigned to David. It has been said that some of these penitential psalms refer to trouble rather than transgression, and to national humiliation and distress more than to sorrow for sin and its confession. The statement of such a theory is, however, surely its own refutation, inasmuch as it would take from us our means of understanding the religion of the Psalmist. Experience with him was the basis of his religious life. His penitence on account of wrongdoing was a great factor in that experience. It led him to love

the divine law: it was his meditation all the day (cxix. 97); and to spread forth his hands unto God, after whom his soul thirsted as a weary land (cxliii. 6). For he was assured from his own personal experience that

He will fulfil the desire of them that fear Him;  
He will also hear their cry, and will save them (cxlv. 19).

These psalms lay bare the human heart in all its moods and emotions. They breathe the spirit of simple faith and complete trust in the mercy and faithfulness of Yahweh; they evince an experience both profound in its nature and far-reaching in its influence. The modern Church is again giving to experience its rightful place. It realizes that its best defences are not metaphysical, but are to be found in holy lives: in those who are living epistles known and read of all men.

Every thoughtful reader of the Psalter must have noticed the influence, in this particular, that the Psalms had upon the Apostle Paul. In Rom. iv. 6 we read, 'Even as David also pronounceth blessing upon the man unto whom God reckoneth righteousness apart

from works.' Dr. Scott<sup>1</sup> points out, 'In the psalms is that consciousness of the personal relationships of the soul to God out of which Christianity arose; and in them not a little of that mysticism which is a characteristic mark of Paul, and on which his mind must have been fed.'

There are some psalms in which we find expressions of self-righteousness that appear inconsistent, in their assertions of integrity and innocence, with what we find elsewhere. But we must remember that the integrity is relative and not absolute; that the life of the community, in the Psalmist's day, was of more importance than that of the individual; that the writers of the Psalms only possessed low views of morality; and that their language, being poetic, was not so carefully chosen as it was strong and intense. In Ps. vii. 8, the writer says, 'Judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness and to mine integrity that is in me.' This is an appeal to Yahweh, the righteous Judge, to be delivered from a cruel and vindictive

<sup>1</sup> *The Pauline Epistles*, p. 44.

enemy. With the notion, current in his age, that rewards and punishments were dispensed in this life, influencing him, the character of the Psalmist's language is what we might expect under the peculiar circumstances in which he was placed.

Other passages that may be studied with profit are xvii. 1-3, xviii. 20-24, xxvi. 1-6. Instead of seeing inconsistency in the experiences they reveal, we shall see the efforts of men who, amid much opposition and with a limited ethical view, are striving to live godly lives, and whose simple childlike faith impels them to trust unreservedly and without wavering upon the almighty power and unfailing rectitude of Yahweh. Pious men, at different stages of their lives, have differing experiences. It was so with the writers of these psalms ; and their words, quoted above, do but express this fact. They have nothing in common with the self-righteousness of the Pharisee, neither do they lay any claim to absolute perfection ; but they do affirm that, to the extent of their serving God, they expect to enjoy the divine favour and blessing ;

while having no fellowship with the wicked, they expect not to be classed with them in the varied providences that Yahweh may see fit to send.

For the Psalms unfold the truth that over man there is a divine providence: this is a fact of great religious import. In the so-called National psalms (xxxi., lxxxvi., cxviii.), this thought is clearly unfolded. Israel was the child of Yahweh, and the Father was intensely interested in the safety and well-being of His beloved. One of the most striking features of the Psalter, however, is its universal outlook. This is more than we expected to find, and comes upon us as a great surprise. A study of the 145th Psalm will make this matter clear. Let us take as an example verses 8 and 9:

The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion;

Slow to anger, and of great mercy.

The LORD is good to all;

And His tender mercies are over all His works.

From the general to the particular is an easy stage. Individual providence is implicit in a national one. Doubtless the

Psalmist felt that He who could provide for the needs of the many could supply the needs of the units. Hence he affirms

A man's goings are established of the **LORD** ;  
And He delighteth in his way (xxxvii. 23).

It is, however, in the 23rd Psalm that we have the sublimest illustration of this most comforting truth. It is specially in times of stress and strain, through distress and difficulties, that the plural pronoun gives place to the singular one. These exquisite odes concerning divine providence were born amid the darkness of oppression and sorrow. If we would enter into the plenitude of meaning here revealed, we must ourselves be baptized with experiences similar to those from which the composers suffered. The reaction, however, that results from deliverance evokes joyous expressions of affection and faith such as are found crystallized in passages like xviii. 1 and 2 :

I love Thee, O **LORD**, my strength.  
The **LORD** is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer ;  
My God, my strong rock, in Him will I trust.

There was one problem in relation to the

divine government of the world that appears to have often perplexed the Psalmist. In harmony with the current theology of his time, he expected the wicked to be punished for his wrong-doing and the righteous to be rewarded. But when, in the evolution of divine providence, this result did not ensue, he was distressed and went perilously near the precipice of apostasy. In the intensity of his disappointment and grief he cried out :

Wherefore hidest Thou Thy face,  
And forgettest our affliction and our oppression ? (xli. 24).

There are two methods suggested in the Psalter by which the mysteries of divine providence may be solved. The first is found in Psalm lxxiii., and the second in Psalm lxxvii. Both make very interesting reading, and will repay the student who carefully and prayerfully meditates upon them. They do not give us a final solution of this ever-present problem ; but they lead us, by varied stages of thought, to unshaken faith in the rectitude of the divine character. The Eternal must do right : retribution is sure to come even

though it is delayed for a while. The end will show the futility and deceptive nature of the prosperity of the wicked. God will certainly save His people, as He delivered His more ancient Israel at the time of the Exodus. Finally, when the divine purposes are all accomplished, and His saints have been brought safely through their distresses, the conclusion at which the Psalmist arrived shall be found perfectly correct ; and to us will be given the blessed experience :

Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel,  
And afterward receive me to glory (lxxiii. 24).

The Psalms teach that not only is the Eternal in this world sustaining, controlling, guiding all things for the benefit of man ; but that in the fulfilment of the divine purpose He uses angels in the service of His providence. They are

Mighty in strength, that fulfil His word,  
Hearkening unto the voice of His word (ciii. 20).

Their name is Cherubim (xviii. 10). In Ps. cxlviii. 2, they are summoned, with the other parts of creation, to render praise to Yah.

One other word remains to be said here. The Holy Spirit in the Psalter is also the God of providence. It is not the 'mere language of metaphor' that said

Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created ;  
And Thou renewest the face of the ground (civ. 30).

It is the Divine Spirit, the third Person in the ever-blessed Trinity, who is here affirmed to be the Giver and Continuer of life throughout the universe.

We shall not fully understand the Psalmist's conception of man unless we note the intensely patriotic spirit of the Jews. It was part of their religion. They regarded themselves as the elect people of Yahweh ; and it was their great boast and a fundamental part of their creed that

Surely God is good to Israel,  
Even to such as are pure in heart (lxxiii. 1).

On account of their close relation to the Eternal, special blessings rested upon them : their enemies are His enemies, and their prosperity is His joy. Hence the Psalmist exhorts his countrymen to give thanks unto

the LORD and to make known His doings among the peoples (cv. 1). Even in the punishments that came to them because of their sins they recognized the good hand of the Lord their God upon them. And they acknowledged that God had chosen them for Himself to be witnesses of His power and faithfulness: so leading all that came within their influence to

Sing unto God, ye kingdoms of the earth ;  
O sing praises unto the Lord (lxviii. 32).

There is one psalm, the 71st, that has been called 'a prayer for old age.' By Professor Briggs it is regarded as a prayer of the Israelitish congregation; but by most commentators it is believed to express a personal experience. Some parts may be national, but it certainly gives us the matured thoughts of an aged saint. Hengstenberg regards it as Davidical; Dummelow affirms that it was apparently written by an old man in the time of the Exile. The first three verses are quoted from the 31st Psalm; and in the body of the composition other psalms are also quoted.

Yet it possesses a unity and beauty all its own ; and it contains much with which our hearts sympathize and our lives strive to copy. The Psalmist had realized that throughout life the divine help and guidance had been his great hope and trust (v. 5). He believed that God would not cast him off, but be with him right to the end of life's journey, when his strength failed and his need was greatest. The plaintive strain of the opening ends in the gladness of assured faith :

Yea, even when I am old and grey-headed, O God,  
    forsake me not ;  
Until I have declared Thy strength unto the next  
    generation,  
Thy might to every one that is to come (lxxi. 18).

## CHAPTER XI

### SIN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

Sin a reality—The nature of sin—The commission of sin brings its own punishment—The problem of suffering—Man unable to justify himself—This truth unfolded in the 143rd Psalm—How can man be justified before God?—Personal sense of responsibility—Doctrine of atonement—Continuous punishment for impenitent.

OUR discussion of divine providence in relation to man has brought us face to face with the existence of sin. The Psalmist divides men into the righteous and the wicked; and the ease with which he seems to make this division is worthy of note. As man becomes more sensible of the presence and authority of God, he realizes in greater degree the heinousness of sin. This thought is emphasized greatly by Simon.<sup>1</sup> The view of

<sup>1</sup> *Reconciliation by Incarnation*, p. 142.

sin given to us in the Psalms is that it is something unnatural, something contrary to the ideal order of things. The words in Ps. li. 10 illustrate this thought :

>Create in me a clean heart, O God,  
And renew a right spirit within me.

To the Psalmist sin was a reality. The essence of sin is found, on the one hand, in its voluntary separation from God ; and, on the other, a sense of guilt arising from the consciousness of wrong-doing that leads to personal liability to punishment. Its nature is well illustrated in Ps. xxxii. 5 in the phrase ' iniquity of my sin.' This quotation is from one of the penitential psalms, and illustrates very finely the pictorial diction of the Hebrew language. Both terms signify deflection from the true aim. The first, חַטָּאת, means ' missing the mark,' like *άμαρτία* in Greek ; and the other, נַפְשׁ, the perverseness in taking a wrong aim. The former indicates a failure in reaching the goal God intended all His people to attain ; and the latter the guilty turning aside from following the path of life. A

study of the synonyms for sin, as they are found in the Psalter, is an exceedingly interesting exercise: its three degrees are all mentioned by the Psalmist in cvi. 6:

We have sinned with our fathers,  
We have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly.

Guilt always leads to punishment. Man is responsible for sin because he has been endowed with free will. When self is made the ruling principle of life, the Divine Spirit is withdrawn. The consequence of this experience is terrible and far-reaching. Sin erects a barrier between the sinner and his God. Of this fact the Psalmist was fully conscious. He says,

If I regard iniquity in my heart,  
The Lord will not hear (lxvi. 18).

These words teach us that the sinner will be left to himself to follow his own devices. In his life sin will become a principle governing all his actions and capable of endless development. Created in the image of God, and intended for growth in grace, he will deface that image more and more; and his conduct

will evidence the awful truth that his punishment has in it all the 'fullness of spiritual life to evil.' If the seed of sin be sown, we reap a habit, then a character, and finally a destiny.

The Psalms acknowledge the truth that sin leads to suffering. The writers of them were strongly convinced that there was a close connexion between the two. How the connexion was to be explained they were often unable to say; but to the fact they appealed again and again. Even in those early days the power of heredity, and its influence upon human lives, was felt. Hence the Psalmist cries (lxxix. 8), 'Remember not against us the sins of our ancestors.' But the most potent influence at work in bringing suffering was felt to be personal sin. Hence, after transgression, the penitent cries out:

Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation :  
And uphold me with a free spirit (li. 12).

One problem that appears to have greatly perplexed the Psalmist was that, though the wicked man sinned, yet he seemed to prosper.

He saw him in great power spreading himself like a green tree in its native soil (xxxvii. 35). He could not reconcile the fact with his faith that sin brings its own punishment. But when he considered the matter more fully, he realized how worthless, unsatisfying, and transient is all prosperity that is not based upon righteousness. The end may be delayed, but come it surely will. When it arrives, the punishment will be all the more complete. So complete will be the punishment, and so utterly will he perish, that not a trace of him will be found (v. 36).

Deep down in his heart the Psalmist had no misgiving as to the ultimate issue. Yahweh will render to every man according to his work (lxii. 12). The union of divine power and mercy is the guarantee of a righteous rule. Retribution may seem to the human view long in coming; but the sinner, however he may try, cannot escape the penalties attached to his own wrongdoing.

For He cometh to judge the earth :

He shall judge the world with righteousness,  
And the peoples with His truth (cxvi. 13).

That man is unable to justify himself in the sight of God by his own merits or ability is a truth clearly taught in the Psalter. The question might well be asked, ‘And who shall stand in Thy sight when once Thou art angry ?’ (lxxvi. 7). God possesses all power. We may sometimes smile at man’s anger, for it is harmless ; but we dare not smile at God’s. He can do whatsoever He will. The inward sense of sin in the Psalmist never allowed him to put in any claim before God. He asks the question, only however expecting to receive a negative reply :

If Thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities,  
O LORD, who shall stand ? (cxxxi. 3).

In the 143rd Psalm, which is the last of the penitential psalms, an appeal is made for an answer to prayer on the ground of the divine righteousness. Yet the Psalmist does not press his plea from the standpoint of abstract justice, because he knows there is no one that is righteous in the sight of God. He rather prays that Yahweh will not enter into judgement with him, ‘For in Thy sight shall no

man living be justified' (v. 2). This was a fundamental article in his faith; and from him doubtless the truth has been taken into the Christian economy. St. Paul quotes it twice (Rom. iii. 20; Gal. ii. 16), thereby indicating the high value he placed upon it.

If man could not personally justify himself before God, it becomes an important matter to learn how the Psalmist considered this great task could be accomplished. This is the practical problem of the Psalms. In no passage is it anywhere stated that sacrifice can make an atonement for sin. With Yahweh unforgiven sin will receive continuous punishment; but pardon may now be obtained. The sacrifices acceptable to God are a broken spirit and a contrite heart (li. 17). Sacrifice is only of value when expressive of righteousness; when offered otherwise, the sacrifices of the wicked are an abomination to Yahweh. Hence we read in xl. 6:

Sacrifice and offering Thou hast no delight in;  
Mine ears hast Thou opened:  
Burnt-offering and sin-offering hast Thou not required.

How greatly suggestive is the middle line of this verse !

For the forgiveness of sin, the Psalmist taught, there must be a personal consciousness of its heinous character in the sight of God.

Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned,  
And done that which is evil in Thy sight (li. 4).

This is the characteristic attitude of all who are conscious of guilt through transgression. And even in the fuller light of the New Testament teaching these expressions do not lose their force. 'They are only filled with a deeper meaning.' To this sense of responsibility, the Psalmist adds a complete surrender to God and an absolute trust in His mercy as essentials to pardon. In the second of the Alphabetic Psalms (25th) these truths are clearly unfolded. After affirming that Yahweh is the God of his salvation, to whose service he has devoted 'all the day,' he prays :

Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions :

According to Thy lovingkindness remember Thou me,  
For Thy goodness' sake, O LORD.

The Psalms do not contain much teaching about the doctrine of atonement; but undoubtedly the germ-thought is found in them. Man is represented as born in sin, and as personally guilty of transgression. He has no merits to plead, and no vicarious sacrifices to offer. Yet, though in the sight of Yahweh 'no flesh living is justified,' the Psalmist clearly teaches us that there is forgiveness with the Lord, and that 'with Him is plenteous redemption' (cxxxi. 7). Thus the Psalms prepare the way for the fuller revelation of the gospel. Faith under each dispensation is essential to forgiveness; but its character in both is not identical.

Another fact of human experience in its relation to sin, unfolded in the Psalter, is that the Psalmist was conscious of his forgiveness. The gladness of pardon was his assured possession. Joyfully he cried :

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity,

And in whose spirit there is no guile (xxxii. 1, 2).

The three terms employed in this quotation not only illustrate the character of sin, but show how complete its forgiveness is: the sin is pardoned, is covered, and the iniquity not imputed. As we read carefully through this psalm, we do not feel far away from St. Paul's doctrine of the imputation of faith for righteousness (Rom. iv. 5-8), and we learn somewhat of the reason why the Psalter has become so greatly endeared to the heart of Christendom. The gladness that comes to the pardoned sinner, when in penitence and prayer he has dedicated himself to God and the service of His Christ, has never yet found more suitable expression than in the words of the 40th Psalm :

He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of  
the miry clay ;  
And He set my feet upon a rock, and established my  
goings.  
And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise  
unto our God (verses 2, 3).

## CHAPTER XII

### PERSONAL RELIGION

Devotional element makes Psalms attractive—Communion with God vital to personal piety—Religious poetry the medium of this communion—Relation between Infinity and Intimacy—Recognition of divine mercies and expressions of gratitude—Why there are references to sacrifice in the Psalter—Uprightness needed to obtain divine pardon—No inconsistency in the teaching—The penitent receives assurances of pardon and peace.

THE devotional element of the Psalms is one of their greatest attractions. We have revealed to us thereby the soul in its closest relation to its Creator, and have placed, within easy reach, suitable language in which to approach the divine mercy-seat in order to make our wants and wishes known. The Psalter invites us not so much to doctrines we may study as to an experience we may share. It shows to us how the man of God,

in the varied experience of a chequered career, may serve his God, grow in grace, receive the divine forgiveness, and finally be received to glory everlasting.

Communion with Yahweh is, in the Psalms, represented as vital to personal piety ; and in this spiritual intercourse with the Almighty the writers take evident delight. They realize that it was good to draw near to God (lxxiii. 28). Their souls go out in intense yearning :

Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King and my God :  
For unto Thee do I pray (v. 2).

This evident experience of fellowship with the divine prepares the way and that in a two-fold manner, as Dr. J. Scott Lidgett points out,<sup>1</sup> for the New Testament doctrine of the Fatherhood of God.

With David religious poetry became the instrument of the soul's direct intercourse with God, and the model for all time by which pious men could express their religious

<sup>1</sup> *The Fatherhood of God*, p. 140.

thoughts and feelings. David said concerning his own words :

The Spirit of the LORD spake by me,  
And His word was upon my tongue (2 Sam. xxiii. 2).

His language thus became the vehicle by which pious men in all ages may express the varied experiences through which, in the providence of God, they are called to pass. We have in the Psalter a vocabulary for use in the holy of holies of the divine presence. The fact that these expressions, so noble and comprehensive, have met the universal needs of men for union and communion with God, forces us to the conclusion that the Psalter is a divinely-inspired book : a rule of faith and practice.

It is interesting to note how the Psalmist, when expressing the soul's communion with God, brings into union the twin truths of Infinity and Intimacy. He shows that each thought is necessary to the other ; and that a true understanding of the relation between them will lead to the enrichment of both. When man realizes that God is able to supply

all his needs, then he will approach Him with confidence. The Psalmists have made God more real to us and the way to His presence more visible. In many of the psalms this joy of fellowship is crystallized into language that makes music in human souls. How beautifully is this truth illustrated in the 73rd Psalm :

Nevertheless I am continually with Thee :  
Thou hast holden my right hand.  
Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel  
And afterward receive me to glory.  
Whom have I in heaven but Thee ?  
And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee  
(verses 23-25).

One of the finest psalms in the Psalter is the 18th. It has been called a 'magnificent lyrical rapture.' In it the influence of Hebrew topography can easily be discerned. The subtle alternation of the 'I' and the 'thou' is also worthy of note. It shows us how close and intense is the communion between the worshipper and his God. The personal tone runs through the whole of this sublime ode ; and it closes with an ascription of praise to Yahweh who showeth lovingkindness to

David and his seed for ever. As Dr. McLaren has said, 'Nowhere else, even in the Psalms, and if not there, certainly nowhere else, is there such a continuous tide of unmixed praise, such magnificence of imagery, such passion of love to the delivering God, such joyous energy of conquering trust.'

One of the titles given to the Psalter is the 'Book of Praise.' It was the Hymn-book of the worshippers, and its title indicates its relation to Old Testament worship. We meet with frequent references to the Temple and its varied services amid its pages. Entering into the spirit of these illustrations, we feel somewhat of the gladness of the Psalmist when he

Went with the throng, and led them to the house of God,  
With the voice of joy and praise, a multitude keeping  
holy-day (xlii. 4).

It was in the Sanctuary, and during the worship of Yahweh, that the Psalmist realized how good God had been to him, supplying his temporal needs and meeting his spiritual requirements. In the 48th Psalm and the 9th

verse he gives utterance to this thought in the following words :

We have thought on Thy lovingkindness, O God,  
In the midst of Thy temple.

Waiting upon God in His own House, he saw the divine ' power and glory ' (lxiii. 2), and the revelation made him conscious how obligatory upon him was the duty to prove his gratitude by the consecration of himself and his powers to the service of the Almighty. It was in the ' Sanctuary of God ' (lxxiii. 17) that the mystery of divine providence that had depressed his heart, weighed down his spirit, and been almost ' too painful ' for him to consider, became clear ; and in the latter end of the wicked he understood the meaning of their present prosperity. And on account of the divine guidance he enjoyed, he was led gratefully to kiss the hand that led him out of the labyrinth.

There are many references in the Psalms to sacrifice, and that for a variety of purposes. Among the Jews it was a recognized institution : those that had made a covenant with

God by sacrifices are called His saints (l. 5), i.e. His godly ones, even though they were scattered over all the earth. In entering the Temple, to worship Yahweh in His sanctuary, the Psalmist did not come empty-handed. It was his delight as well as duty to 'bring an offering and come into His courts' (xcvi. 8). Ps. lxvi. 13 may be cited as typical of this experience :

I will come into Thy house with burnt-offerings ;  
I will pay Thee my vows.

The Psalmists refer to sacrifice as something with which God is not well pleased. In the 40th Psalm, v. 6, we read :

Sacrifice and offering Thou hast no delight in ;  
Burnt-offering and sin-offering hast Thou not required.

Sacrifice is here viewed ethically ; as a symbol, not as a type. There is no connexion in these words with the atonement of Jesus Christ ; not till the latter part of Isaiah is that predicted.

The offering of sacrifices is usually connected with the giving of thanks. Speaking generally, they are the natural method by which

gratitude is expressed. All who had received goodness at the hands of Yahweh should render thanks to Him for it. This the Psalmist was not slow to do. This thought is beautifully expressed in Ps. liv. 6 :

With a freewill offering will I sacrifice unto Thee :  
I will give thanks unto Thy name, O LORD, for it is  
good.

A reference to Num. xv. 3 will show that the phrase used is the ordinary one for the sacrifice of thanksgiving. The importance of this duty, in the ethical code of the writers of the Psalms, evidently loomed large. They realized that it was a duty men oft-times honoured more in the breach than in the observance. Hence their exhortations were couched in some such words as the following :

Oh that men would praise the Lord for His goodness,  
And for His wonderful works to the children of men  
(cvii. 15).

That sacrifices, while acceptable to the Almighty for purposes of thanksgiving and peace-offerings, were insufficient to procure pardon for sin, was a fact well known to the

writers of the Psalms. Their lyric odes clearly evidence their standpoint on this subject. The heart and life must be in harmony with the divine will, or it will be morally impossible to worship God in sincerity and truth. Only they who walk uprightly, work righteousness, and speak truth in the heart (xv. 2) can sojourn in the Lord's tabernacle. Not mere sacrifice, even of a burnt-offering, but godly sorrow for sin is the condition of forgiveness. Of this profound and far-reaching truth we have perhaps no finer illustration than the words of the 51st Psalm : whether we regard them as David's words after he had been reproved for his heinous sin by Nathan the prophet, or as a penitential prayer by the people of the restoration in the time of Nehemiah.

For Thou delightest not in sacrifice ; else would I give it :  
Thou hast no pleasure in burnt-offering.  
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit :  
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise (verses 16, 17).

It has been suggested that in the Psalms there is inconsistency in the expressions used

concerning the means of forgiveness. But this supposed inconsistency is more apparent than real. No one can thoughtfully read, e.g. the 66th Psalm, without feeling that, while sacrifice had its true place in the religion of the Israelite, no one knew better than he the moral conditions that were essential to make his sacrifice acceptable to Yahweh. With the divine commands sounding in his ears, and the manifold lustrations of the Temple service ever before him, he could hardly mistake the divine purpose or say otherwise than Ps. lxv. 3 :

    Iniquities prevail against me :  
    As for our transgressions, Thou shalt purge them away.

It was from the mercy of God, and not any intrinsic merit in the offering, that forgiveness came. 'The Most High their Redeemer, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity' (lxxviii. 38).

Of the certainty of his pardon, that came as the result of his penitential sorrow, David and his fellow psalmists had not the shadow of a doubt. The Lord attended to the voice

of his prayer. To him came the delightful consciousness of pardon and reconciliation to God. He knew that his transgression was taken away, that his sin was covered ; that he possessed the joy of the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. This quotation is from the first of those psalms (xxxii., li., cxxx., cxlii.) that Martin Luther so felicitously calls the ' *Psalmi Paulini.*' It expresses the great contentment of those who, in divine forgiveness, have found the satisfaction of present needs, and a firm foundation on which to rest their hopes of future blessedness.

## CHAPTER XIII

### VIEWS CONCERNING FUTURE LIFE

Varied opinions held about a life beyond the grave—Gleams of brightness and strong hopes expressed in some psalms—To the Psalmist the grave did not end all—Fellowship with Yahweh not ended by death—Solutions of life's inconsistencies—The Psalms give a hope of eternal life—The reason why there are only few texts—The Psalmist had faith in a future life.

ABOUT the Psalmist's conception of the future, and of a life beyond the grave, varied opinions have been held. Even in the Jewish hymnal itself, diverse views are expressed. Usually death is regarded in the Psalter as the end of communion with God, and has little or no moral element in it. Death is dreaded because of its shadowy existence and hopeless gloom, e.g. Ps. lxxxviii. 10-12 :

Wilt thou show wonders to the dead ?  
Shall they that are deceased arise and praise thee ?

Shall Thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave ?  
Or Thy faithfulness in Destruction ?

Shall Thy wonders be known in the dark ?

And Thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness ?

Should death come to them in a ripe old age, and their children live on to perpetuate their name—for childlessness was regarded as a sign of God's displeasure—then they are satisfied. The hope of the Psalmists, like that of the prophets, was directed to the future of the community on earth rather than to individual pleasures in heaven. Buoyed up with this hope, they walked careless amid outward cares. Prosperity comes unsought, and troubles are not to be feared. Even the surface of their experience is not ruffled by any cruel blasts of misfortune that blow around them. At all times they rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him (Ps. xxxvii. 7).

While to some of the writers of these religious odes the future was dark and full of gloom, to others there came gleams of brightness, moments of insight transient but real, when these godly men realized that communion with God was of such a nature that

even death could not end it ; that one who had desired God, and spent many years striving to become Godlike, must enjoy Him for ever. Further, one of the problems that disturbed the faith of these early Jews was the inequalities of divine providence and the mysteries of God's moral government, e.g. Psalms xvii. and lxxiii. Is it too much to say that David, at least, found a solution for these problems in the assurance of a life beyond the grave ; and that the sublime faith of these Psalmists sometimes touched, if it did not actually grip, the doctrine of immortality ? The wonder is that they who knew so little believed so much, and conquered in so hard a battle.

Dr. Beet in his volume on the *Immortality of the Soul*, asserts 'That all human souls are immortal, or that they will think and feel for ever, is not taught or implied in the Old Testament.' These words we regard as absolutely too sweeping, if not altogether untrue. The dictum is certainly contrary to the teaching of the major portion of the principal divines of Christendom during the last nine-

teen centuries ; and it is also at variance with the instinct of immortality that revealed itself in the nations of antiquity as well as among the peoples of the modern world. Max Müller observes that in the Vedas—the sacred books of the ancient Hindus—‘ we find what is really the *sine qua non* of all religion ; a belief in immortality, and in personal immortality.’ We surely cannot believe that the Jewish Scriptures possessed a less exalted conception than Hindu Vedas. Dr. Scott<sup>1</sup> affirms that, in the canonical literature of the Old Testament, there is a clear beginning of the Christian hope. Occasionally, a clear, full faith is uttered concerning redemption from death.

There are several psalms that, in our judgment, prove to us that the writers of them possessed a strong hope of the deliverance from death, and a possession of everlasting happiness in the presence of Yahweh. To the study of these we now turn. But before we deal with the more direct passages, there is a class that deserves our attention on

<sup>1</sup> *The Pauline Epistles*, p. 45.

account of their suggestive character. In Ps. xxxix. 12 we have the following petition :

Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear to my cry ;  
Hold not thy peace at my tears :  
For I am a stranger with thee,  
A sojourner, as all my fathers were.

These words remind us of what Abraham said to the children of Heth (Gen. xxiii. 4), when he asked from them the possession of a burying-place so that he could give sepulture to Sarah his late wife. The exposition of the words is to be found in Heb. xi. 14-16 :

For they that say such things make it manifest that they are seeking after a country of their own.

And if indeed they had been mindful of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return.

But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly : wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God : for He hath prepared for them a city.

Abraham's home was not in Egypt. He looked for a better country, and though he had never seen it, yet he was content to live in faith, and until he reached it to continue a 'sojourner' on earth. So with the Psalmist.

We can only understand his confession in the same way as the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews did. He was born in Judah, so that we cannot take his words literally. He was a sojourner only because he lived in the faith of his fathers and looked for another country, i.e. a heavenly, whose maker and builder is God.

In his *Introduction to the Psalms*, Dr. Kirkpatrick admits that 'unquestionably Psalms xvi., xvii., and lxxiii. contain the germ and principle of the doctrine of eternal life.' The words of this author give us the idea that he is either too timid, or too cautious, to say all he would like to declare. Concerning the first of these before-mentioned psalms he argues that the words form a contrast not between life here and life hereafter, but 'between life with and life without God.' Though he almost immediately adds,<sup>1</sup> 'The doctrine of a future life is, however, involved in the Psalmist's faith.' The words of verses 9-11 of Psalm xvi. are as follows :

Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth :  
My flesh also shall dwell in safety.

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<sup>1</sup> *Cambridge Bible for Schools, etc.*, p. 78.

For Thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol ;  
Neither wilt thou suffer Thine holy one to see corruption.

Thou wilt show me the path of life :  
In Thy presence is fullness of joy ;  
In Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

To David the grave was not the end of all things. Death was but the means by which life was revealed ; in the presence of Yahweh he would hereafter enjoy complete satisfaction and pleasures everlasting.

In the next psalm, the 17th (v. 15) we read :

As for me, I shall behold Thy face in righteousness :  
I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness.

Here the Psalmist expresses his intention of seeking in God his highest good ; that while many sought their portion in children and worldly goods, he was convinced that nothing less than the divine image, wrought into his nature, would satisfy his soul's deepest needs. It is not enough to say that the words, ' when I awake ' mean ' when the night of calamity be overpast ' ; or ' the daily renewal of communion ' with God ; or ' a waking sight of God as distinguished from a dream or

a vision.' The words may contain these thoughts; but they also include more. The Psalmist cannot have entertained the idea that fellowship with Yahweh, once begun and daily renewed, is to be brought to an abrupt close by death. Already in Ps. xiii. 3 death has been referred to as a sleep. Now he speaks of the awakening, i.e. of the life beyond death. We are told in Exod. xxiii. 20 that no man can see God's face and live; yet, in the land beyond the river of death, it is to be possible. As Jesus Christ has told us, 'The pure in heart shall see God.' The result of this beatific vision will be a divine likeness. The word used by David is 'temunah': the same word as is used in Num. xii. 8 to express the divine glory manifested to Moses. It refers to a visible appearance; and the verb, shall be satisfied, is in the future, implying continuance.

Another psalm that seems to us to unfold the doctrine of a future life is the 73rd. Verses 23-25 read as follows:

Nevertheless I am continually with Thee:  
Thou hast holden my right hand.

Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel,  
And afterward receive me to glory.  
Whom have I in heaven but Thee ?  
And there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee.

Dr. Briggs translates the twenty-fourth verse, ' Unto glory Thou wilt take me ' ; and he says, ' The Psalmist finds the solution of the inconsistencies of this life in the final reward to the righteous after death.' The whole burden of the psalm can hardly lead us to any other conclusion. The inequalities and mysteries of life had greatly troubled Asaph : they had been a pain and a grief to him. Yet, in the sanctuary of God, light had shone upon his darkness, revealing his own ignorance as well as the folly of the wicked. Nevertheless he kept his hold upon God ; and was assured that God would guide him aright in this life, and at the end take him, as He had before taken Enoch, to Himself in glory. In striving to learn the true and exact meaning of the words of the Psalmist, we must never forget that the Pentateuch was their Bible ; that they had studied it with prayerful attention ; and that ' its chimes ring

through their songs.' The translation of Enoch, the Antediluvian saint, would suggest to their minds a world of precious truth respecting the future life; and strengthen, in their hearts, the hope of eternal glory in the presence of God.

Finally, we turn to Psalm xlix., and in the 15th verse we read :

But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol :  
For He shall receive me.

In these words the hope of eternal life is asserted. The psalm is a didactic poem; it deals specifically with the question now under review, and its opening words indicate that its teaching is important and claims our careful and prayerful attention. It is also worthy of note as illustrating the importance of the psalm. The introduction tells us also that the psalm was indited not only for Jews, but for all men everywhere. It is intended for all people, all inhabitants of the world. The purpose of the psalm is to encourage God's people when they are apt to become perplexed and distressed over the mysteries of

divine providence. He shows how vain it is for wealthy men to trust in their riches ; because they cannot avert the coming of death, either to themselves or their friends, however much they may strive to do so. While to the righteous, death is not a separation from God, but rather the portal through which He receives them to everlasting habitations. To attempt to confine the meaning of this 15th verse to this life would be 'mistaken exegesis and false psychology.'<sup>1</sup> Even Professor Cheyne allows that the poet has that religious intuition which forms the kernel of the hope of immortality.

We must admit that the number of evidential texts is not great, and reasons for this paucity may now be given. It will be wise for us, however, to remember first that silence is often a stronger argument than its opposite. Its very suggestiveness gives food for thought, and exerts a strong influence upon all thinking people. Isaac Taylor, quoted by Dr. Binnie (*On Psalms*, p. 276), refers to the fact that many psalms which seem to demand

<sup>1</sup> *The Praises of Israel*, p. 171.

the reference to a future life and its blessedness, with the exception of two or three phrases, and these of ambiguous meaning, are without that element. He points out that these very psalms have actually fed the piety of the pious, and given godly men and women the means to express their deepest religious experience. He infers that this comparative paucity of expressions, affirming faith in the rest that remains for the people of God, is due to the fact that the training of the soul in all things that make for righteousness is of far greater importance than the constant reiteration of a hope of future blessedness ; and that this training requires a concentration of thought and affections upon the nature and attributes of the ' Infinite Excellence.' There is good philosophy in this view of truth. Continuous culture, not spasmodic excitement, is the present purpose of godliness ; and in the small number of expressions to be found in the Psalter concerning promised glory, we recognize the providence of God. We are taught thereby, not so much that ' Heaven is a very glorious place, and exceed-

ingly to be desired, as that without holiness no man can enter into it.' To think of God more than of heaven, and of godlikeness more than heavenly blessedness, is in this life the paramount duty.

There is another reason by which this paucity of expressions concerning the future life can be explained. Experience is a school in which men learn lessons that could be derived from no other source. That death is the punishment for sin, and that in the evolution of divine providence the godly should trust God completely in spite of all appearance, were two great lessons that these Israelites had to learn. But their tuition could only be accomplished by means of a course of long and stern discipline. They had to be trained to realize the limitation of life in comparison with the latent possibilities in human nature; and to feel the need of a future life when those possibilities can be brought to fruition. Hence the attention of the Psalmists was centred more on the preparation for death, which would deliver them from the bondage of sin, than upon the

‘glory’ to which God would ‘receive’ them when their probationary course was run.

We conclude, then, that the Psalmists did, to some extent, give expression to their faith in a life beyond the grave. However dim their vision, however fragmentary their thoughts, and however occasional their words, yet they did behold rays of a coming sunrise; and, by faith, they looked forward to a time when the mysteries of divine providence would be solved, and ‘pleasures for evermore’ repay them for all the discipline which, in this life, they had been called to endure. There are a few passages, e.g.,

For in death there is no remembrance of Thee:  
In Sheol who shall give Thee thanks? (vi. 5);

O spare me, that I may recover strength,  
Before I go hence, and be no more (xxxix. 13);

which convey the idea that death is the end of man’s existence. But the idea of extinction is foreign to the general trend of Old Testament teaching.<sup>1</sup> The passages we have quoted reflect experiences through which most

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Doctrine of Immortality*, by Dr. S. D. Salmond, p. 170.

men pass at some part of their life: times of sadness and despondency brought on through the dark, mysterious, painful things that envelop us. But they are not the expressions of our proper normal conditions. So with the Psalter. These verses are not the true index of its general teaching. The whole tenor of that is anti-materialistic. The greatest prayer of the Psalmists and their intensest longing was crystallized in the words already expounded,

Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel,  
And afterward receive me to glory.

## CHAPTER XIV

### IMPRECATORY PSALMS

The morality of the Old Testament lower than that of the New Testament—Imprecations sometimes necessary—Based on a religious passion for justice—Imprecations found elsewhere in the Old Testament—In the Psalms they are clothed in poetical garb—They are divided into four classes—Not merely predictions—Dr. Kittel's view controverted—They cannot be understood by Christian experience—They are national songs, and contain an undercurrent of hope—They teach present-day lessons.

THE morality of the Old Testament is based on a lower plane than that of the New Testament. This truth must ever be borne in mind when reading the Psalter. There are some psalms that to many modern minds, with our increased knowledge and higher ideals, appear to be expressed in unnecessarily strong language. The explanation of these

expressions is a question of morals, and it is matter for thankfulness that their character is better understood to-day than it has been in some periods of past ages. The term by which these psalms are known is imprecatory ; and to the study of them we now turn.

Moral difficulties cannot be solved by timid compromises. Truth will ultimately prevail ; meanwhile its sanctions must be upheld at all hazards. No one will seek to justify these imprecations by the standard of morals found in the New Testament. The Psalmist was the child of his own age, and his utterances should not be appraised by the ethics of a later date. They belong to the spirit of the Old Testament, and by that spirit alone should they be judged. The system which allowed these imprecations was an incomplete one. What is not permissible now was allowable then.

Dr. McLaren points out<sup>1</sup> that the prophecies of David convey an eternal truth which modern sentimentalism finds very shocking, but which is witnessed over and

<sup>1</sup> *Life of David as Reflected in his Psalms*, p. 73.

over again in the relief that fills the heart of nations and of individuals when evil men fade.

There are times in all ages when imprecati-  
tions are necessary, and when they give ex-  
pression to the righteous anger of God's  
people against His enemies. In the religion  
of Jesus Christ it is more discriminating, and  
certainly more refined; but we must never  
forget that in the economy of grace, we may  
'be angry and sin not' (Eph. iv. 26). It  
would probably be better for the world if our  
righteous indignation over sin, instead of  
being sealed up in our own bosom, found  
voice and made itself felt in stern denuncia-  
tion of wrongdoing. In the providence of  
God, His righteousness is on the one side  
vindictory and saving, and on the other re-  
tributive and destructive.<sup>1</sup> It is a weak and  
sickly sentimentalism that would have godly  
men and women act in any other way.

It is this truth that unfolds to us the true  
nature of inspiration in relation to the sub-  
ject now under discussion. A religious pas-  
sion for justice was the moving principle that

<sup>1</sup> *Dr. Briggs on the Psalms*, Intro. c.

led these writers to use these comminatory expressions. The Psalms express that burning belief in a moral Judge of the world who must do right, that through the ages has saved the Church from the dangers and indifference of worldliness. The minds of the Psalmists, enlightened by the Spirit of God, grasped the truth according to the age and circumstances in which they lived. And the language in which they clothed their thoughts was in harmony with the limitations and modes of thought that obtained amongst the people with whom, in the providence of God, their lot was cast.

In other parts of the Old Testament, besides the Psalms, imprecatory utterances are found. Of this fact two illustrations must suffice. In Neh. iv. 5, we read : ‘Hear, O our God ; for we are despised : and turn back their reproach upon their own head, and give them up to spoiling in a land of captivity : and cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before Thee : for they have provoked Thee to anger before the builders.’ In Jer. xvii. 18 we read : ‘Let

them be ashamed that persecute me, but let not me be ashamed ; let them be dismayed, but let not me be dismayed : bring upon them the day of evil, and destroy them with double destruction.'

There are many other passages of like import. The fact of their existence must not be forgotten in our effort to understand the meaning and purpose of these imprecatory psalms. Their significance must be apparent to every thoughtful student of Holy Writ. The imprecations in the Psalms are clothed in poetry, and we may need to make some allowance for the desire of poetic effect ; they deal not only with individuals, but also with the Israelitish nation and even with the religion of Yahweh itself ; they are quoted by our Lord Jesus Christ, e.g. John ii. 17, xiii. 18, and have their essential propriety in the peculiar circumstances that gave them birth.

As illustrations of imprecatory psalms, where punishment is invoked upon the wicked for their neglect of religion and their persecution of Yahweh's servants, we give the following :

Let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in Sheol (xxxi. 17).

Let death come suddenly upon them,  
Let them go down alive into the pit :  
For wickedness is in their dwelling, in the midst of them (lv. 15).

Let burning coals fall upon them :  
Let them be cast into the fire ;  
Into deep pits, that they rise not up again (cxl. 10).

These imprecations have been divided into four classes, according to the particular circumstances to which they are reputed to belong.

(1) Ps. lii. 4, &c. These verses refer to the persecutions of Jeremiah and his associates by those who were striving to destroy the national religion. (2) Psalm cxxxvii. This refers to the brutal cruelty experienced by the Jews at the hands of Edom and Moab when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem. (3) Pss. ix. 20-21, x. 15, lxix. 23-29, lxxxiii. 10-18, have reference to the treachery of Sanballat and Tobiah mentioned in Nehemiah, chapters ii.-vi. (4) Pss. lxxii. 10-12, cix. 6-29, are connected with the persecution of Antiochus, when a determined effort was made to destroy the worshippers of Yahweh.

In explanation of these imprecations, it has been suggested that the language used is that of prediction, not of wish or prayer; and that the imperative form of the verb is used for the future. But the grammar of the language is against this view. The imperative is the highest expression of the will, and in these imprecations evidently is indicated the real desires of the writers. Neither need we try to explain away the imprecations of Psalms lxix. and cix. by regarding them as the curses of the Psalmist's enemies, rather than those uttered by himself. The historical setting of the psalms would preclude that view, while the expressions used would lead us to an opposite conclusion.

Dr. Rudolf Kittel affirms<sup>1</sup> that these psalms were written by mean-spirited persons; and declares that they are historical, instructive witnesses to what men have, in past ages, accredited to God. He says, 'It is not necessary to excuse them; they belong to the past; to palliate them would be quite as foolish as to blame them; to repeat them

<sup>1</sup> *The Scientific Study of the Old Testament*, p. 143.

would be blasphemy and not to be thought of in these days.' From this view of the subject we entirely dissent. These psalms did not arise from personal vindictiveness ; they cannot be blamed as the outpouring of a revengeful spirit. He who could say (Ps. cix. 4),

For my love they are my adversaries :  
But I give myself unto prayer ;

was moved by different motives, and his words result from a nobler conception of man's relation to his fellow and his God.

These psalms will never be truly understood if we seek their explanation from our present Christian experience. They must be read in the light of the ideas concerning the divine government that prevailed when they were written. Hebrew modes of thought were different from ours. Their conceptions took concrete form. The sinner and his sin were inseparable ; the latter could not be punished except through the former. And as their ideas were very largely confined to this life, the sinner who persists in his wicked-

ness and refuses to reform must, with his family, that, in harmony with Hebrew thought, was part of him, be punished according to the heinousness of the sin. The Psalmists believed that Yahweh would punish wrongdoing, whether committed by individuals or nations: hence they prayed that He would arise in His strength, and vindicate His glory by inflicting the punishment that was deserved.

Many of these imprecatory psalms are national songs.<sup>1</sup> The expressions that call for vengeance upon the enemies of their beloved Israel were surely as sincere as those found in our higher civilization. Does not our own National Anthem contain such prayers as the following?—

O Lord our God, arise,  
Scatter his enemies,  
And make them fall! . . .  
Confound their politics;  
Frustrate their knavish tricks.

No surprise need be shown by us when we read

<sup>1</sup> George Jackson, B.A., *Studies in the Old Testament*, p. 183.

that the Psalmists, jealous for God's honour and anxious for the welfare of their father-land, pray :

Arise, O LORD ; let not man prevail ;  
Let the nations be judged in Thy sight.  
Put them in fear, O LORD :  
Let the nations know themselves to be but men (ix. 19-20). (See also cxxxvii. 8.)

One feature of these imprecatory psalms is often lost sight of, and yet it should influence us greatly in the opinion we form concerning them. While many of them were written under the influence of strong passion, there is in each of them an undercurrent of hope that the punishment of Yahweh may lead to repentance ; and that the divine chastisements may be beneficial in bringing the ungodly to ways of truth and righteousness.

The Psalms are amongst the classics of religion, and even these imprecatory ones are not without their lessons. They enable us to look into the profound depths of human souls, as, torn from conflicting emotions, they pray that Yahweh will save them from their enemies and vindicate His righteousness

by the punishment of the wicked. Further, they teach us the necessity that exists for moral earnestness. Our sympathy for a sinner should never lead us to overlook the heinous character of sin, or lessen our efforts to destroy it. Finally, our study of these psalms should evoke within us a spring of thankfulness to the Almighty that our lot has been cast, not in Old Testament times when a low state of spiritual culture prevailed, but under the New Testament dispensation, when it is our privilege to possess and practise the purer conceptions and the nobler ideals of the world's peerless Teacher.

## CHAPTER XV

### MESSIANIC PSALMS

The term Messiah not used in the Psalter as a technical one—Christ and His Apostles quoted the Psalms—The relation of the Old and New Testaments—Belief of both Jews and Gentiles that the Psalter witnesses to the Messiah—The Rationalists' change of front—How Messianic Psalms are divided—David a type of Christ—Calvin and the 'principle of types'—Mystical Psalms—Predictions of the sufferings and majesty of Messiah—Hupfeld's view of Psalm xvi.—Psalm xxii. sacred to Christians—Exegesis of second Psalm: quoted in New Testament—Psalm xlvi. under the form of Epithalamium—Typical character of Psalm lxxii.—Psalm cx. Messianic.

In Luke xxiv. 44 we read the following words, 'And He said unto them, These are My words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, how that all things must be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the Psalms,

concerning Me.' These words teach us that in the Psalter there is a witness to the Messiahship of Jesus, and that the united testimony of these Psalms reveals the unity of the divine plan that is gradually being accomplished, through successive ages of the world, and which will end in the universal sovereignty of Him who is God over all blessed for evermore.

The term Messiah does not occur in the Old Testament Scriptures as a technical one, except in Dan. ix. 25 and 26 ; and in reference to Saul, and a few other kings, who were anointed with the regal unction. But the idea is undoubtedly found there. It is not necessary to interpret 'Old Testament prophecies through the New Testament fulfilment' to find it. As Davidson points out,<sup>1</sup> the highest and holiest longings of Old Testament seers were virtually Messianic. They looked forward to a time when the anointed one should come as the Son of God, yet a suffering Redeemer ; as a perfect Saviour, the Redeemer and Judge of the world. From the Psalms

<sup>1</sup> *Introduction to Old Testament*, vol. ii. p. 276.

we obtain a richer conception of the Messianic ideal than we do from the prophetical writings.

That Christ quoted several passages from the Psalms, and applied them to Himself as the Messiah, is clearly the teaching of the New Testament. J. R. Wolfe, in his book on the Messiah, affirms that there is 'no need to apply either a fanciful or a mystical sense to these passages.' Without detaching them from their original connexion, we can accept what our Lord quotes as sincerely and intentionally used. The quotations were not used for what we, in these days, call critical or historical purposes ; they were quoted for the purpose of bringing home to the minds and hearts of the hearers the reality of His Messianic work.

By this means, new light was shed upon expressions used by the Psalmists ; and Old Testament texts received larger and deeper meaning from the expositions of them given by the Christ. The disciples of our Lord copied the example of their Master, and also quoted from the Psalms, at the same time

unfolding their meaning and purpose as Messianic. It is no wonder that, after He had opened their minds that they might understand the Scriptures (Luke xxiv. 45), they were able to see light in His light. He had taught them what was written in the Psalms concerning Himself ; and they had been apt scholars in His school, as their writings abundantly testify.

The relation of the Old and New Testaments to each other is finely illustrated by this question of the witness of the Psalms to Christ. Sometimes we meet in the Psalter with a prophecy that is direct in its character ; and, looking away from the seer's own time, the writer anticipates the power and majesty of a universal kingdom in New Testament times. Sometimes there is unfolded a type that refers primarily to the time in which the Psalmists lived ; but whose details cannot be fully met except in the antitype, i.e. in the Messiah of the New Testament. As Prof. Lavison in his *Praises of Israel* says (page 211), ' In Him [Christ] is the goal of Old Testament history, the explanation of Old Testament problems,

the culmination of Old Testament hopes and aspirations.'

Since the days of our Lord and His apostles, both Jews and Gentiles have believed that the Psalter testified to the Messiahship of the Christ. This thought has been the constant belief of the Church. As to their particular view in regard to whether specific psalms contained the Messianic doctrine, various opinions have been held ; but there has been great unanimity, and it has usually been assumed that there are strictly and properly so-called Messianic psalms. The reason of this view is not far to seek, because Jews have regarded expressions used in some of the psalms as most suitable to the character and work of the Messiah ; while Christians have found in the quotations of their Lord and His apostles the basis of their faith.

It may also be interesting to note the change of front adopted by Rationalists in relation to this subject. At first their attitude was that of haughty indifference.<sup>1</sup> It

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Binnie's *Psalm, History, Teaching, and Use*, p. 159.

was of little moment whether ancient Israel had Messianic hopes or not: ignorance in such a matter was regarded as rather praiseworthy than otherwise. In these days, however, Rationalism has changed its methods. The Bible is the study of its most scholarly adherents. They are glad to acknowledge the literary merits even of its Messianic expectation. But their exposition of this expectation is intended to destroy its influence, by making inspiration a natural experience, with no further effects than the writer can put into his words.

The Messianic Psalms have been divided in several ways. Some have been called typical, others mystical. When the Psalmist had in view the culmination of the divine kingdom upon earth, his words were properly Messianic; but when those words had immediate reference to his own times, 'but as part of an organism not yet completed,' they are regarded as indirectly and typically Messianic.

That David was a type of Christ is a view that has prevailed among Christians from the first century. It was taught by Christ,

as we have seen, and was confirmed by His apostles. From the Psalms we learn that David knew the Messiah would be born of his seed, and be a priest after the order of Melchizedek (ex. 4). If we admit that he was inspired, then we can easily understand how, e.g. in the 18th Psalm, he uses language that, while it may apply to himself, is more truly applicable to Christ. Only in the Messiah can such words as the following prediction (vs. 49 and 50) be completely fulfilled :

Therefore will I give thanks unto Thee, O L ORD, among  
the nations,  
And wilt sing praises unto Thy name.  
Great deliverance giveth He to His king ;  
And sheweth lovingkindness to His anointed,  
To David and to his seed, for evermore.

The theologian who is said to have successfully applied the principle of types to the Messianic Psalms was Calvin. Many students of Holy Writ, before his day, as they read the Psalter, realized that the words oft-times refer to One greater than David ; and the wings of their faith enabled them to rise to loftier conceptions of prophetic fulfilment until they

became conscious of the presence of the Christ. In solving the problem as to which part of a given psalm should be regarded as referring to David, and which to Christ, difficulty has been experienced. Some expositors have been led into the allegorizing style of the Fathers; while others, like Calvin, have reconciled the principle of exact interpretation with an ultimate reference in Messianic Psalms.

The psalms to which the term 'Mystical' is applied are, e.g. the 16th and 40th, in which the true key to their meaning is to be found, not in their direct prediction of Christ, nor in the doctrine of types, but in 'the mystical union between Christ and His Church.' In some psalms there is this mystical union present, if we regard them as Messianic: a union that is more intimate than body and soul, and that warrants the writer in uniting Christ and His people in the same song. Augustine uses this view of the subject very fully, but presses the principle too far. The tendency to do this is, perhaps, the strongest reason why we should not use the term.

Amongst other classifications of the Psalms that have been made, one other division only need be referred to here; namely, that by which the Messianic Psalms have been divided into (1) those which predict the sufferings and death of the Messiah, and (2) those which unfold the future extent and duration of the Messiah's kingdom. The first class includes Psalms xvi., xxii., xl.; and by some writers Psalm lxix., concerning which Dr. Briggs says<sup>1</sup> that it transcends in its delineation of the suffering servant 'that of Isaiah liii. in his vivid lifelike picture of the Suffering Saviour.'

Concerning the interpretation of Psalm xvi. diverse views have been held; from Davidson, who asserts that the resurrection of Messiah is an idea foreign to David's words, to Wolfe, who regards its Messianic import as easy and natural to perceive. The rendering of the word נֶגֶד (v. 10) as 'corruption' has been questioned; but that is quite as correct as the word 'grave' which is suggested in its place; and it is usually so translated.

<sup>1</sup> *Psalms*, vol. i. Intro. xcvii.

(See Job xvii. 4, where it forms a parallel רַכְמָת, 'worms.') The psalm is quoted by St. Peter in Acts ii., not only as referring to Christ, but as proving His resurrection. And St. Paul, in his address to the men of Israel at Antioch, cited this psalm (xiii. 35-38) to prove that it referred to Jesus, who saw no corruption, and through whom men may be justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.

We cannot accept the dictum that the language of the ode refuses to admit the Messianic interpretation. Hupfield affirms<sup>1</sup> it may be psychologically impossible; but psychology has only to do with the workings of human intellect and precludes the idea of inspiration. One who was under the immediate instruction of our Lord, and who had received the spirit of inspiration, would not be in the least likely to make such a serious mistake as to ascribe to our Lord a psalm that had no reference to Him. We need not idealize this 16th Psalm to obtain its full meaning; while, on the other hand, we may readily admit

<sup>1</sup> *Die Psalmen*, vol. i. p. 308.

that its meaning is best understood in the light of its fulfilment.

The next psalm that claims our attention is the 22nd, and like the 16th, it is quoted in the New Testament and there regarded as Messianic. There are objections to its being so applied. In verse 2, e.g., the Psalmist refers to his tribulations as having continued for a time; but certainly neither in the biography of David, nor of any other suffering one known to us, is there an experience corresponding to the sorrows here described. His enemies never parted his garments, and he could never expect any deliverance of his to be the cause of the conversion of all nations to Yahweh; while to none other than the Messiah could the confident anticipations of universal conquest, as the result of his present sufferings, be applied. The language is to some degree personal; it is also representative.

This psalm is sacred to Christians because at His crucifixion our Lord used its opening words as expressive of the anguish of His soul. Those that stood round the cross

mocking Him, taunted Him with the words of the 8th verse; while the 14th and 18th verses disclosed the dreadful accompaniments of the crucifixion. Augustine may not have been far from the truth when, in his *Ennaratio*, he suggests that the exclamation of Christ is equivalent to 'This Psalm was written concerning Me.'

The last psalm of this class is the 40th, which, as we have already remarked, is placed by some exegetes as amongst the Mystical-Messianic psalms. Internal evidences exclude it from being a direct Messianic prediction. The writer can hardly refer here to the Messiah, neither can the sinless Saviour Himself be regarded as the speaker in the psalm. Verse 12 should be conclusive on this point :

For innumerable evils have compassed me about,  
Mine iniquities have overtaken me, so that I am not  
able to look up;  
They are more than the hairs of my head, and my  
heart hath failed me.

It has been suggested that these words imply some inward conception between the Divine

Sufferer and the sin for which He atoned ; and that the words of the Psalmist are an anticipation of 2 Cor. v. 21, 'Him who knew no sin He made to be sin on our behalf.' The psalm may suggest to us the inner secret of the Atonement ; but we cannot believe that the inspiration of the Psalmist was so extensive as to include such a profound theological thought.

Furthermore, the reference in the tenth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews to the offering of the body of our Lord upon the cross once for all is based upon a false reading of the Hebrew text. The Revised Version in the Psalms reads, 'Mine ears hast thou opened.' There can hardly be said, in verses 6-8 of the psalm, to be any allusion to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross ; though the words may be regarded as appropriate language to describe the fundamental nature of that sacrifice. The psalm is probably a composite one of the period of the Restoration ; and the writer, consciously or unconsciously, describes the ideal of the life of Jesus Christ.

The second class of psalms describes the power and majesty of the Messiah, and includes Psalms ii., xlv., lxxii., and cx. The Second Psalm is of the prophetic type and unfolds, in bold and picturesque language, the Messianic age and kingdom. Davidson admits that it is applied to the Messiah by New Testament writers; but he affirms that internal evidences are against this interpretation. The writer in Hastings' *Dictionary* appears to take the same view. A careful study of these evidences, however, can lead us to a different conclusion. The opening words of the decree in v. 7:

The Lord said unto me, Thou art My Son;  
This day have I begotten Thee,

are most significant. We do not forget that the term Son of God is predicted of Israel (Exod. iv. 22), and of rulers (Ps. lxxxii. 6, &c.); but when בָּנִי אֱלֹהִים, 'Thou art My Son,' is with בָּנִיתִךְ, 'begotten thee,' it indicates that the Messiah occupies a different position from that which any Israelitish king could do—

that as head of this heavenly society to which reference is made, He can address the Almighty as His Father.

It requires a great stretch of the imagination to suppose that David, or any other Hebrew monarch, uses the language of v. 2 concerning himself. Rather do we think that the close connexion declared to exist between Yahweh and His anointed reveals clearly its Messianic nature. Dr. Briggs regards the psalm as a Messianic introduction to the Psalter of David ; and he affirms that it 'describes the nations plotting against Yahweh and His Messiah.' This original psalm presents a world-wide dominion such as no king of the Jews ever yet possessed, and which ideal can only be reached when the Messiah has the nations for His inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession.

In the New Testament this psalm is quoted by the early Christians after the release of Peter and John (Acts iv. 25), 'Who by the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of our father David Thy servant, didst say,

Why did the Gentiles rage,  
And the peoples imagine vain things ?  
The kings of the earth set themselves in array,  
And the rulers were gathered together,  
Against the Lord, and against His Anointed.'

We also find a reference to the psalm in Acts xiii. 33, when Paul in his address to his fellow countrymen at Antioch, says, 'God hath fulfilled His promise, in that He raised up Jesus ; as also it is written in the Second Psalm, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten thee.' These words are also quoted by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (i. 5, v. 5) to prove that the position of the Christ is superior to that anywhere assigned to angels ; and that Christians possess in Him a divinely-appointed High-priest sufficient for all their needs.

These references prove to us that the writers of the New Testament taught that Psalm ii. was a direct Messianic prediction ; and that, in the early days of Christianity, there was a general conviction among the disciples of our Lord that the Second Psalm referred to the Messiah and therefore to Jesus.

It may be interesting to note that Jewish expositors, both ancient and modern,<sup>1</sup> agree with the reference of the psalm to their Messiah. Rabbi Jarchi did, indeed, abandon this interpretation ; but only, as he himself affirms, that he might thus destroy the argument derived from it by Christians in favour of the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth.

In the interpretation of Psalm xlv. it will be necessary to remember the character of Oriental poetry. The psalm is written under the form of an Epithalamium ; but concerning whose marriage diverse views have been held by scholars. To refer it wholly to the marriage of Solomon with Hiram's daughter, Jehu with some unknown one, Jorum (Jehoram) with Athalia, or Ptolemy Philadelphus with a daughter of Pharaoh, would surely be insufficient exegesis, and out of harmony with the full exposition of the text.

The psalm may be termed typically Messianic ; though one modern writer regards v. 7-8, that ascribe to the king godlike

<sup>1</sup> J. R. Wolfe, *The Messiah as Predicted in Pentateuch and Psalm*, p. 56.

qualities such as could only be possessed by Messiah, as a gloss inserted by some later editor. The Epistle to the Hebrews quotes (i. 8-9) the sixth and seventh verses of the psalm :

Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever ;  
And the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom.

Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity ;  
Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee  
With the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

This title is never in the Scriptures applied to any creature unless the connexion is such that mistake as to its meaning is impossible. Exception has been taken to the use of אלהים as vocative here ; and many suggestions have been made to avoid the obvious ascription of divinity to the Messiah ; but none of these explanations satisfies the needs of the case. Then we must remember that the Psalter is a devotional book. If this 45th Psalm only celebrates the wedding of a Jewish king, or some other important personage, it would be out of place in this composition. And, unless we admit v. 1 to be a gloss inserted

by a late editor, it is impossible to understand how the teaching of the psalm can be described as specially 'a goodly matter' that made the tongue of the Psalmist like the pen of a ready writer.

The name of Solomon is prefixed to Psalm lxxii. As it was his great ambition, when he came to the throne, to rule in righteousness and with equity, we may have here the hopes and aspirations of his golden prime. The title, however, may be a pseudonym prefixed to the psalm by its author who composed it from the standpoint of Solomon. The former part is a prayer; the latter a prediction. The prayer contains petitions for the king that Yahweh would endow him with all needful blessings, so that prosperity might reign in the land and his name be honoured for ever. But the words of the Psalmist only find their complete fulfilment in that greater king, the Messiah of the Jews, upon whom Israel's hopes had been concentrated. The monarch of Israel was a real type, and was a constant reminder of the substance of which he was the shadow. As the type receded from

their view, their thoughts would centre more and more round the antitype in whom all men should be blessed, and who shall establish an everlasting kingdom of peace and justice.

About the direct Messianic character of the 110th Psalm there should be little question ; though Jewish rabbis, perceiving what must result if its Messianic character be admitted, have striven to find some other subject that would satisfy its statements. If it be allowed that Jesus is the Messiah, and that it is He who, as a priest for ever, is to sit at the right hand of Yahweh, then Judaism has been superseded and its mission has come to an end. This great truth the Epistle to the Hebrews reveals and enforces. And the varied hypotheses brought forward by rabbis to neutralize the influence of the truth are untenable.

Of no Jewish ruler could it truly be said that he held the co-ordinate offices of priest and king for ever ; neither could it be truly affirmed of any of them that at any time they sat at the right hand of the Almighty.

Dr. McLaren says,<sup>1</sup> ‘The blending of the royal and priestly offices in the Messiah, and the eternal duration in Him of both, is a distinct advancement in the development of Messianic prophecy.’ Delitzsch allows this 110th Psalm to be directly Messianic in the sense that it contains prophecy that points immediately to the person of a coming One who was fully to set up the kingdom of God on earth.

As to the character of the opinions held by the Jews of ancient times, the words of Jesus Christ clearly testify. They tacitly assume that the Pharisees assented to His teaching on the subject (Mark xii. 36-37); while they unfold to us our Lord’s own exposition of it. If, amongst the learned men of Israel, there had been a difference of opinion whether this psalm should be referred to the Messiah or not, the Pharisees would certainly have taken advantage of it to escape from the horns of the dilemma on which they were placed by the Saviour’s question, ‘ David himself calleth him Lord; and whence is he

<sup>1</sup> *Life of David as Reflected in his Psalms*, p. 195.

his Son ?' As Dr. Kirkpatrick, in the *Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*, says, 'If they could have replied that the psalm was not written by David, or that it was not inspired, or that it did not refer to the Messiah, they would have had an answer ready to hand. But evidently it did not occur to them that any one of these points could be disputed.' The argument rests upon the words in the psalms being those of David, either personally or ideally; and this New Testament reference can leave no doubt as to the Messianic character of the psalm.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE CHRISTIAN USE OF THE PSALTER

The Psalms express universal needs—They have been more used by Christians than Jews—How our Lord's spirituality was nourished—References in the New Testament to the Psalms—The Psalter greatly valued by early Christians—It possesses a profoundly human character—Methods of singing the Psalms—Testimonies to their power and preciousness—A knowledge of the Psalms of great advantage.

THE Christian Church, like the Jewish, early felt its need of suitable language to express its experience and thoughts. And having the example of their Divine Master and His apostles before them, they naturally turned to the Psalms to supply their need. They found them eminently fitted to cherish devotional feelings and for expressing their love

and liberty to their Lord. The experiences which the Psalmists crystallize into words are so varied, and yet so natural, that they truly reflect those of the sincere Christian everywhere. Whether they contain petitions for help required, or gratitude for mercies received, they are just what the devout heart desires ; and by means of them unwavering trust in God is continued from day to day.

They are for this purpose, as Horne says, 'adorned with the figures, and set off with all the graces of poetry ; and poetry itself is designed yet farther to be recommended by the charms of music, thus consecrated to the service of God, that so delight may prepare the way for improvement and pleasure become the handmaid of wisdom ; while every turbulent passion is calmed by sacred melody, and the evil spirit is still dispossessed by the harp of the son of Jesse.'

The whole of the Psalter does not appear to have been used in the service of praise in the Jewish temple. Many psalms were sung by the Levites, and probably in unison to the

accompaniment of instrumental music.<sup>1</sup> But as far as we have evidence to illustrate the thought, they have been more used in Christian churches than in Hebrew places of worship. The many references in the New Testament to the singing of psalms by the apostles of Jesus show that it was a habit which developed from the first days of Christianity and was cultivated, both in public and private, by the followers of the Christ. Since then the custom has spread over the whole Church, and is now practised throughout the Christian world.

The Psalter affords language to express all experiences that are common to Christians. Our Lord's spiritual life was nourished on the Psalms. This fact is clearly unfolded in all the important parts of His life. At his temptation, when Satan quoted the 91st Psalm, our Lord felt the force of the words because to Him they were a precious reality ; when teaching the people, He enforced His doctrine by quotations from various parts of the Psalter, e.g. xxxv. 19 and xxxvii. 11. In

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Edersheim, *The Temple*, p. 78.

His argument with the Pharisees, He referred them to Psalm cx. to prove that the Messianic son of David was at the same time his Lord. When He was partaking of the last supper with His disciples, the hymn they sang would be the Hallel of Psalms cxiii.-cxviii. ; when the cross lay athwart His pathway, He expressed the state of His own mind in the words of Ps. vi. 4 ; and when He hung upon the cross and yielded up the ghost, His last words were taken from Psalms xxii. and xxxvi.

The first Christian hymns, as Dr. Kirkpatrick points out, 'are composed after the model of psalms ; and the Magnificat, Benedictus, and Nunc Dimittis contain numerous echoes of them.' In the varied books of the New Testament there are frequent references to the Psalms. The Gospels use them freely, and apply them to our Lord and His work. Stephen, in his defence before the Jewish council at Jerusalem, quoted from Psalm cxxxii. ; and St. Paul often uses parts of the Psalter, both for purposes of practical exhortation and mutual edification. St. James

(v. 13) exhorts his brethren to sing psalms as the natural outlet of the spirit of praise; while from 1 Cor. xiv. 26 we learn that the singing of psalms was a common practice in the services of the Corinthian Church.

The early Christians not only used the Psalter in their worship, but also sang psalms in their homes and at their work. St. Jerome, who was superintendent of a monastery at Bethlehem about the end of the fourth century, writes thus, in epistle forty-six, about the Holy Land: ‘Wherever you turn the labourer at the plough sings Alleluia: the toiling reaper beguiles his work with psalms: the vinedresser, as he prunes the vine with his curved hook, sings something of David’s. These are the songs of this province: these, to use the common phrase, are its love ditties: these the shepherd whistles; these are the labourer’s implements.’

The profoundly human character of the Psalms may account for the great affection the early Christians entertained for them. They are the true classics of religion. Luther’s words concerning the Psalter are eternally

true, ‘There thou lookest into the innermost souls of all saints.’ The Psalms afford Christians, in all the changing scenes of life, suitable language to express their varied experiences. They help him in his efforts to find God, they give him words to indicate his intense gladness at the reception of divine grace, they afford him a vocabulary for use in the Holy of holies, they find a voice for him in his struggle with temptation and sufferings, they make his bed in his sickness, they are his comfort in the valley of the shadow of death, and they point him to the future when at God’s right hand he will enjoy pleasures for evermore.

The Psalms were sung by the early Christians in various ways to which different names were given. When a psalm was sung by one person it was called *cantus tractus*; and when by the choir or whole congregation it was termed *cantus directaneous*. When the choir and congregation took alternate parts in singing, then the effort was called *cantus responsarius*; and when the psalm was sung alternately by the two sides of a choir, it was said

to be rendered in *cantus antiphonalis*. This antiphonal method of singing is said to have been introduced to the Church at Antioch by Ignatius, its first bishop. And from this city, where Christians first received their name, this method of rendering the Psalms has spread far and wide throughout the churches.

The Fathers and Apologists of the early Church have written many testimonies to the power, value, preciousness, and influence of the Psalter. Bishop Perowne reminds us that Tertullian says that, in the second century, Christians were wont to sing many of the psalms in their love-feasts. St. Basil, in the fourth century, affirms that in the Psalms is a complete theology ; and that it is a common storehouse of good doctrines, providing exactly what is expedient for every one ; and Sidonius Apollinaris, in poetic strains, tells us of boatmen who 'drag the boat,' singing their Alleluia until the banks respond to the anthem which, he says, represents the voyage of the Christian pilgrim's life. In his epistle to Marcellinus on the ' Interpretation of the

Psalms,' St. Athanasius says, 'They seem to me to be a kind of mirror for every one who sings them, in which he may observe the motions of the soul, and as he observes them give utterance to them in words. He who hears them read, takes them as if they were specially for him. . . . If thou meditate on these things and study the Psalms, thou shalt be able under the guidance of the Spirit to grasp their meaning; and thou shalt emulate the life of the divinely-inspired men who uttered these words.' The early Fathers used the Psalter for practical purposes. They quoted the different psalms to enforce truth and make its obligation binding upon their hearers.

A knowledge of the Psalter has always been regarded as of great advantage. St. Patrick, in the fifth century, is said to have repeated it daily, and St. Benedict followed his example. The singing of psalms forms a large part of the religious exercises in monasteries and nunneries. And, from ancient times, candidates for ordination were expected to be able to repeat the Psalms. The Patriarch of

Constantinople, in the fifth century, would not ordain a priest unless he could recite the Psalter ; and St. Gregory the Great refused to consecrate John the Presbyter to the see of Ravenna because he did not know the Psalter. These actions were in harmony with the decrees of several councils, e.g. that of Toledo (A.D. 653), which ordered that ' no one henceforth shall be promoted to any ecclesiastical dignity who does not perfectly know the whole Psalter.'

The study of the Psalms, during our era, has ever been an important feature in the development of the Christian Church. In the Middle Ages, the commentaries upon them all followed the allegorical principle of Augustine ; while, under the Reformation, this method of exposition gave place to the grammatical and literary study of the original texts. In more recent times, the work of Kennet upon the Hebrew text, and Lowth upon Hebrew poetry, has contributed much to a fuller understanding of the history and character of the Psalms ; while the modern study of Textual, Higher, Historical, and

Literary criticism has led to a deeper knowledge and truer estimate of the great value of this most important portion of the Old Testament Scriptures.

## INDEX

Acrostic form, 82-3  
 Adonai, 116  
 Alamoth, 88, 109  
 Alexandrian school, 12  
 Alphabetic psalms, 83, 149  
 Ambrose, 29  
 Angels, 138  
 Anthropopathy, 125  
 Antiochan school, 12  
 Antiphonal singing, 28, 217  
 Apostles, the, and the Psalms, 12, 191  
 Aramaisms, 37  
 Asaph, 41, 42, 88  
 Athanasius, 218  
 Attributes of God, 122  
 Augustine, 100, 200  
 Authorship of Psalm ex., 38  
 Basil, 113, 217  
 Beet, Dr., 165  
 Binnie, Dr., 82, 173, 193  
 Bleek, 44, 48  
 'Book of Praises,' the Psalms as a, 21, 156  
 Briggs, Dr. C. A., 22, 40, 43, 47, 59, 77, 95, 102, 110, 140, 171, 197, 203  
 Budde, 72, 80  
 Burkitt, 95  
 Calmet, 94  
 Calvin, 30, 195  
 Cheyne, Dr., 21, 48, 97, 131, 173  
 Chrysostom, 29  
 Daily psalms, 86  
 Dallinger, Dr., 128  
 Darwin, 128  
 Date of psalms, means used to determine, 50  
 David, 13, 35, 104, 195 and *passim*  
 Davidson, Dr. S., 25, 47, 48, 58, 70, 97, 190, 202  
 Davison, Dr. W. T., 21, 37, 47, 54, 90, 192  
 Death, ideas of the psalmist on, 163  
 Delitzsch, 36, 64, 91, 209  
 Descriptive titles, 106-9  
 Devotional element, 152  
 De Wette, 64, 71  
 Divine names, special use of, 63 ; description of, 114-18  
 Dorotheus, 12  
 Driver, Dr., 50, 131  
 Dummett, 140  
 Elohim, 63, 114  
 Elyon, 115  
 Eusebius, 12  
 Ewald, 36  
 Experience, the basis of religious life, 130  
 Ezra, 57  
 Fathers and the Psalter, the, 12  
 Figurative language, 66  
 Genesius, 90  
 Gilfillan, 74

Gittith, 109  
 Goliath, 92; additional psalm concerning, 24  
 Grandeur of description in Psalms, 14  
 Greek Septuagint, 23  
 Gregory the Great, 219  
 Hebrew language, 68; music, 87; modes of thought, 185  
 Heman, 88  
 Hengstenberg, 57, 140  
 Higgaion, 96  
 Hilary, 100  
 Hitzig, 14, 36, 47  
 Hooker, 12  
 Horne, Bishop, 11, 47, 212  
 Human element in Psalms, 11  
 Hupfeld, 50, 198  
 Ignatius, 28, 217  
 Immortality, 165 ff  
 Imprecations, 180  
 Interpretation of Ps. xlv., 205  
 Jamnia, synod of, 20  
 Jeduthan, 88  
 Jerome, 12, 28, 215  
 Jews, patriotic spirit of, 139  
 Judas Maccabaeus, 87, 112  
 Keil, 97  
 Kennet, 219  
 Kirkpatrick, Dr., 48, 168, 210, 214  
 Kittel, Dr. Rudolf, 69, 184  
 Korah, sons of, 43  
 Koster, 80  
 Kuennen, 36  
 Ley, 76  
 Lidgett, Dr. J. S., 153  
 Life, origin of, 128  
 Literary value of Psalter, 29  
 Liturgical psalms, 25; titles, 111  
 Lowth, Bishop, 22, 77, 219  
 Lucian, 12  
 Luther, 162  
 McLaren, Dr., 14, 23, 156, 179, 209  
 Matheson, Dr., 130  
 Messiah in O.T. Scriptures, 190  
 Mizmorim, 22  
 Momerie, Dr., 120  
 Moral difficulties, 178  
 Müller, Max, 166  
 Musical accompaniment, 93; directions, 26, 89; titles, 109  
 Mystery of divine providence, 137, 145, 157  
 Mystical psalms, 196  
 National psalms, 135  
 Nature psalms, 14-16, 126-7  
 Noldeke, 37  
 Old age, the 71st psalm a prayer for, 140  
 Olhausen, 36, 47, 54, 59  
 Origen, 12  
 Orphan psalms, 98  
 Pantaenus, 12  
 Parallelism, 73-81  
 Peake, Prof., 130  
 Penitential psalms, 131, 147  
 Perowne, Dr., 21, 30, 36, 217  
 Personality of God taught, 119  
 Pilgrim psalter, the, 60  
 Pope, Dr. W. B., 125  
 Pre-exilic psalms, 48  
 Proverbial psalms, 25  
 Psalms, human element in, 11; described in detail, 14-15, 24-6; place in the canon, 20; five books of, 22, 56; spiritual meaning and devotional use of, 30;

Jewish writers on, 34; religious emotion the charm of, 74; 'self-righteousness' in, 133-4; eternal life in, 168-73; Christ and the, 12, 191-2, 213; express universal needs, 211

Psalms specially mentioned: ii., 202; viii., 15, 127; xvi., 197; xviii., 14, 36, 155; xix., 15; xxii., 199; xxiii., 67, 71, 72, 136; xxiv., 105; xxix., 15; xl., 200; xlv., 75, 205; li., 39, 130-1; lii., 101; lxxi., 140; lxxii., 40, 207; civ., 15, 127; cx., 38, 208; cxix., 82; cxliii., 147; cxlv., 135

Psalter, literary value of, 29; compiled after Exile, 59; religious character of, 113; a vocabulary for devotional use, 154; more used by Christians than Jews, 213; a complete knowledge of formerly essential, 219

Rabbi Jarchi, 205  
Rabbi Kimchi, 94, 96

Rationalism and the Messianic Psalms, 193

Representative psalms, 44

Rhythm, 66

Sacrifice, references to, 157-81

St. Paul, 132, 204, 214

Scott, Dr., 133, 166

Selah, 83, 93-6

Shaddai, 115

Sheminith, 88, 89, 110

Sidonius Apollinaris, 217

Smith, W. R., 59, 131

Solomon, 207

Spiritual value and questions of authorship or date, 54

Strophes, 80-2

Suffering and sin, 145

Taylor, Isaac, 173

Tertullian, 12, 28, 217

Thanksgiving, 158

Thirtle, 100

Vedas, the, 166

Wellhausen, 48, 68

Wolfe, J. R., 191, 197

Wordsworth, Bishop, 62

Yahweh, 63, 64, 117

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HAZELL, WATSON AND VINEY, LTD.,  
LONDON AND AYLESBURY.







